

Miguel Amorós

# Speeches and texts

Volume 3



2015-2024



# Miguel Amorós

Content by **Miguel Amorós** (1949- ) an anti-industrial anarchist theorist, close to the situationist movement.

In the 1970s he was involved in setting up anarchist groups such as Bandera Negra (Black Flag) and Tierra Libre (Free Land). Jailed by the Spanish Franco regime, he then went into exile in France.

Between 1984 and 1992, Amorós was involved, with Jaime Semprun, in producing the post-situationist review *Encyclopédie des Nuisances*.



Lot of texts are translated by Alias Recluse:

<https://libcom.org/tags/miguel-amoros>



# Content of Volume 3

February 2015	1
<b>Workers Autonomy, Anarchosyndicalism, Anarchism</b>	
March 2015	8
<b>A look at the past: the revolutionary career of Joaquín Pérez</b>	
March 2015	35
<b>An Interview with Miguel Amorós</b>	
<i>Cazarabet - El Sueño Igualitario</i>	
April 2015	41
<b>Vanishing Points in Working Class Culture</b>	
<i>Reflections on the cultural genocide of the proletariat</i>	
April 2015	49
<b>The Civil Society Plague</b>	
<i>The Middle Class and its Discontents</i>	
May 2015	54
<b>The Invasion of Waste</b>	
September 2015	58
<b>The golden mediocrity</b>	
October 2015	65
<b>The Rise and Fall of Weak Thought</b>	

January 2016	75
<b>Libertarian Critique and the Left Wing of Capitalism</b>	
April 2016	81
<b>Interview with Ruta 66</b>	
September 2016	99
<b>The Social Revolution and Civil War in Spain: A Brief Synopsis</b>	
April 2017	108
<b>On Jaime Semprun</b>	
<i>An Interview with Miguel Amorós</i>	
May 2017	120
<b>Bakunin</b>	
July 2017	128
<b>The Situationists and May 1968</b>	
September 2017	139
<b>The Period of Decline</b>	
<i>An assessment of the capitalist crisis based on the works of Jaime Semprun</i>	
September 2017	150
<b>Miguel Amorós and Tomás Ibañez on the Catalanian Crisis</b>	
November 2017	155
<b>Interview by Rubén Martín for <i>El Informador</i></b>	
November 2017	163
<b>The Veins of Latin America are more open than ever</b>	
November 2017	171
<b>The Pitfalls of the Social Economy</b>	

November 2017	178
<b>At the Cutting Edge of the French Disease</b>	
December 2017	184
<b>The Catalanian Affair</b>	
February 2018	191
<b>Anatomy of a Scandal</b>	
February 2018	207
<b>ZAD's Victory</b>	
February 2018	210
<b>When the Barbarians Invade the Periphery</b>	
<i>The Commercialization and Destruction of the Catalanian Pyrenees</i>	
September 2018	217
<b>Taking Stock</b>	
<i>Reflections on the Uncertain Likelihood of a European Revolution</i>	
May 2019	223
<b>The new clothes of capitalist developmentalism</b>	
<i>The new green period of capitalism and its ecological and citizen vanguard</i>	
June 2020	228
<b>The anti-industrial perspective in disaster capitalism</b>	
June 2024	231
<b>The likely causes of the rise of the extreme right in the capitalist world</b>	
August 2024	236
<b>What is Anarchism?</b>	

The **first volume** (1984-2008) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-1-en>

The **second volume** (2009-2014) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-2-en>

This **third volume** (2015-2024) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-3-en>



The complete list of English texts by M. Amoros  
is at the end of this volume.



## Workers Autonomy, Anarchosyndicalism, Anarchism

The question of autonomy was already linked to the first historical manifestations of the working class. By autonomy, we mean the independence of the workers movement with respect to other classes, especially the radical factions of the bourgeoisie that tried to use the working class as shock troops for their own purposes. It therefore means self-activity, self-organization, political and economic self-orientation. The International Workingmen's Association was the first organization that expressed workers autonomy in its motto: "The emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves." The way to realize this autonomy, however, proved to be a divisive issue in the International, which split into two groups: the "Marxists", advocates of the parliamentary struggle and central authority, and the "Bakuninists", enemies of politics and of all authority, advocates of revolutionary action. The defeat of the Paris Commune exacerbated these differences, bringing about a separation between political action and economic struggle; for the Marxist social democrats, the former was supreme, and for the Bakuninist anarchists, the main focus was preparation for the revolution. Social democratic dominance, especially in Germany, took the form of the creation of workers parties in which electoral tactics necessarily assumed priority over the trade unions or syndicates, while in those countries where anarchist influence was predominant, particularly in Spain, the workers associations employed anti-political tactics. On the one hand, voting in favor of gradual reforms and the political mediation of conflicts; on the other, direct action and the insurrectionary strike oriented towards revolutionary ends. The social democracy considered itself to be the vanguard of the proletariat and most of its proponents aspired to the gradual conquest of the bourgeois State, which was to be achieved step by step thanks to a tightly organized and disciplined movement. Organized anarchism, on the other hand, was oriented towards a movement without general staffs and with a high degree of spontaneity, aspiring to the direct establishment, without any transition or intermediate stage, of an egalitarian non-statist social regime based on the free federation of producers' associations. The concept of the Producer or the free worker emerged during this period in opposition to the concept of the Wage Worker or the slave of capital.

Revolutionary syndicalism was a doctrinal current that proclaimed the independence of the trade unions from the parties, and advocated the trade union struggle as the only specifically working class form of struggle. Born in France with the creation of the Federation of the Bourses du Travail in 1892 and then the CGT in 1895, it constituted a reaction against the fragmentation brought about by the parties and against the subordination of the social struggle to the parliamentary arena. It was therefore an attempt to bring about class unity above and beyond any and all ideology by relying on the trade unions, institutions that were not only supposed to devote themselves to the economic struggle and workers control, but were also supposed to become the instruments of social organization and management of production in the post-revolutionary period. Revolutionary syndicalism did not denounce political action, but kept aloof from it; its tactics were direct action against the employing class, boycott, sabotage and the general strike, thanks to which the revolutionary process would take shape. The trade unions, previously simple institutions of self-defense, were no longer considered to be merely fortresses against exploitation, but the motor forces of the revolution and builders of the new society. The nationalist tidal wave of 1914 submerged the trade unions, however, which opposed neither military mobilization nor the war. This meant the end of revolutionary syndicalism as a majority tendency in France, but in Spain revolutionary syndicalism took a step forward: the CNT maintained an anti-militarist stance and adopted a decentralized trade union structure based on local federations and unitary trade unions [*sindicatos únicos*], similar to the structure of the American IWW, which embraced all the trades in each industry. At the La Comedia Congress of 1921, libertarian communism was adopted as the goal of the CNT. At subsequent meetings the CNT decided not to join the Red Trade Union International promoted by the Bolsheviks and to prohibit militants who had become members of political parties from serving in responsible positions in the organization. Thus, what was later known as anarchosyndicalism took shape. Attempts to revise these positions at the reorganizational Congress of El Conservatorio, in 1931, encountered strong opposition from anarchist sectors. The proposal to authorize political action and to transform the trade unions into industrial federations on a national scale triggered strong internal opposition, leading to a split in the CNT, and its unity was not restored until the Zaragoza Congress in May 1936, after mutual concessions on the part of the opposed factions. The revolutionary civil war would confirm the constructive and administrative character of the trade unions as true unitary institutions of the working class after the UGT-CNT alliances, but would at the same time belie their anti-militarism and apoliticism:

the trade union bureaucracy, supported by the ideological anarchist bureaucracy, behaved just like a real patriotic party, and led the working class to disaster.

While the need for effective and free self-organization did not encounter any barriers that could not be breached in the democratic countries, in the absolutist countries such as Russia the workers associations were condemned to an underground existence, and were therefore unable to exercise much influence. The trade unions were not a practical force, since most of the workers remained outside of them. During the insurrectionary movement of 1905, the working class in St. Petersburg spontaneously created a new unitary organization which brought together all the proletarian currents, whose purpose was to transform the masses of striking workers into an effective fighting force: the Council of Workers Delegates, or Soviet. The Soviet was the organization that responded to the need for mounting offensive operations; it meant that the workers, most of whom were previously unorganized, had gone on the offensive. It was “the natural and spontaneous form of every major revolutionary action of the proletariat”, the result of a mass strike, in the words of Rosa Luxemburg (today we would call it a wildcat strike). The mass strike was differentiated from the general strike of the revolutionary syndicalists by virtue of its spontaneity, since it was not proclaimed after a long period of preparation, and the essential role was played by the unorganized workers, not by the trade unionists. The parties and trade unions were instead dragged along by the revolutionary wave, very much contrary to their intentions. By forming the Council and due to the fact that the Council was dedicated to organizing all facets of social life, a transition was made from economics to politics and, as the wildcat strike gradually assumed the character of a regular war, the transition was also made from politics to revolution. The Councils therefore represented collective interests that were far greater than merely economic interests. They were autonomous institutions of the proletariat, but they did not represent the workers in their capacities as members of this or that trade, profession or job, but rather as members of a class. They were revolutionary democratic class institutions, the embodiment of workers autonomy in attack mode, when the proletariat was determined to defeat its enemies and prepared to direct production itself and manage society without the employers and the representatives of the State.

In 1917, the Russian revolutionary situation once again saw the Workers Councils take center stage, this time to be joined by the Councils of Peasants, Sailors and Soldiers. These Councils obviously did not emerge in order to modify the terms of the labor market by raising the price of labor power, but in order to take the place of the municipal councils, the parliaments and the rest of the State apparatus. They embodied the form of the revolution, which no party

and no trade union could represent. They constituted its immediate mass expression. To the extent that victory was not certain, their position was insecure and, as was the case in 1918 in Germany and Hungary, where the influence of social democracy was decisive, the Councils were diverted towards conservative positions that caused them to limit their own prerogatives and finally led to their dissolution. As instruments of the destruction of capitalism they occupied a position that was opposed to the trade unions, which, zealously acting in the interests of their own self-preservation, were stubborn supporters of the framework of negotiations with the bourgeoisie. The trade unions arose in an era of capitalist expansion and formed part of the institutional order, where a trade union bureaucracy was nourished with interests similar to those of the bourgeoisie. Once capitalism entered into crisis, they could no longer perform their defensive and regulatory role, since for the proletariat it was no longer a question of reinforcing its position within capitalism, but of putting an end to capitalism. Thus, in response to the general passivity of the trade unions, along with the wildcat strikes and occupations, other organizational forms arose such as strike assemblies, factory committees and coordinating committees. These structures soon transcended the economic framework and carried out political actions, and as a result they provoked the opposition of the trade union and party bureaucracies. At a higher stage of organizational development, these structures gave way to Workers Councils. But every revolution that allows the previous forms of State power to subsist or that allows new forms of State power to be constructed, only digs its own grave. In Germany, the social democracy was able to paralyze the councilist dynamic in order to subsequently break it down into its component parts, so as to make possible the suppression of the councils by police and military means. In Russia, the Bolsheviks were able to establish a police apparatus and an army which, constructed separately from the Councils, facilitated the growth of a political-State bureaucracy that would domesticate the whole council system and transform it into a mere decorative feature, but not without first destroying the councils that resisted these attempts in bloodbaths such as Kronstadt and the suppression of the councils of Southern Ukraine (the Makhnovists). In Spain, in 1936, the unitary trade unions played the same role as the Councils with respect to the defense of the revolution, production and administration. The slogan, "All power to the trade unions", was the translation of the Russian slogan, "All power to the Soviets". The Spanish revolution, however, did not destroy the bourgeois State but attempted to use it to consolidate its gains, and was compelled to surrender one conquest after another, with the aggravating factor of nourishing the growth of a workers bureaucracy that became one of the main factors responsible for the

defeat of the revolution. When the counterrevolution was unleashed, that is, when the State restored its forces, both the terrain of the Councils as well as that of the revolutionary trade unions were diminished, since they did not know how to, and were incapable of, containing and destroying the State. After a short period of decline, in which they were transformed into technical institutions of mediation and co-management, both disappeared.

Workers Councils are often confused with Factory Councils; they are in fact two completely different things. Factory Councils emerged during the occupations movement of March 1921 in Turin as institutions that organized the workers in their workplaces without the intercession of the trade unions. A precedent for them may be found in the English Shop Stewards of 1915-1920, and the Russian Factory Committees. The Factory Councils were rank and file representative institutions with economic functions related to "workers control" of production. They therefore lacked the political-administrative functions of the Workers Councils, which pertained to a higher stage of the class struggle. They largely exercised functions that previously fell under the jurisdiction of the trade unions, such as the direct representation of the workers or the management of production against capitalism. The Factory Council was not the definitive formulation of class autonomy in the pre-revolutionary period, but only its first step. The Factory Councils formed part of the Soviets in Russia and ended up being mixed with them in Germany, before they were finally destroyed. The need for Councils was not resuscitated by the defeat of fascism in the Western capitalist bloc; but the Councils did reemerge in the Stalinist bloc. The Council system reappeared in Hungary in 1956 as the popular response to police terrorism and party dictatorship, and at the same time called for the reorganization of the economy on really socialist foundations rather than on the house of cards of State capitalism. This gave rise to the parallel formation of Revolutionary Councils (which included artists, writers, soldiers, students and government officials) with clearly political-administrative functions, and Workers Councils (or Factory Councils) which replaced the corrupt trade unions of the regime as the genuine representatives of the economic interests of the workers. The Council system was revealed to be the only democratic alternative not only to the dictatorship, but also to the parliamentary system. The direct democracy of the assemblies is as far removed as possible from the pseudo-democracy of the parties, because only in the Council system is the realization of the political principles of equality and freedom possible. The Council Republic of Hungary lasted twelve days before it was destroyed by Russian tanks. What is remarkable is the fact that the regime had no problems making economic concessions, knowing full well that in that

sphere, in any event, crises would not jeopardize its power. The repression directed against intellectuals, however, was implacable. Real freedom is not born from labor and consumption, but from thought. A submissive people is a people that does not think, whether because it is not allowed to think, or because it has lost the ability to think. This principle is totalitarianism's great contribution to domination. The period of reconstruction that followed the Second World War led to a long period of economic expansion that encouraged social pacts oriented towards economic development. During subsequent moments of crisis—May '68 in France, the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the Assembly Movement of 1975-1977 in Spain, the Autonomist Movement in Italy, *Solidarnosc* in Poland, the fall of the Berlin Wall—factory councils arose under different names, but only had an ephemeral existence. The working class lacked the level of coherence and cohesiveness sufficient to impose its own solution and drive events forward in a revolutionary direction. These outbursts were nothing more than ephemeral anti-capitalist lightning bolts condemned to a rapid extinction, since the market economy, by incorporating bureaucratic State capitalism, was capable of overcoming with relative ease the contradictions to which it gave rise.

To oppose councilism to anarchosyndicalism would be sterile and absurd, since both forms of autonomy arose in particular local conditions, with different traditions and different degrees of organization, and militant workers with diverse ideologies participated in them. Now that the stage of globalization has come to an end and the last developmental cycle of capital has concluded, the main problem is of an altogether different nature, that is, the problem of the extremely low level of combativity of the mass of wage workers, their scarce willingness to organize and even less to conceive perspectives of liberation. It is not just that the masses show absolutely no interest in questioning the society in which they survive; for their resignation contributes to that society's stability. The question of why the working class has ceased to act like a working class has been asked for more than thirty years and there is no easy answer to this question, but any subversive activity has to begin by answering it in a convincing way. No theory of proletarian revolution has been able to survive such a disappearance and such conformism without damage, and anarchism is no exception. For the decline of the revolutionaries goes hand in hand with the decline of their theories, which are now pale doctrinaire reflections of an idyllic and mystified past. The most disparate organizations, ideologies and attitudes take shelter under the label of anarchism, and their common denominator is confusion, cultural isolationism [*guetismo*] and their insufficient presence or absolute absence in the rare instances when conflicts do occur. There is, however, one aspect of anarchism that remains

untarnished, the rejection of authority, of politics and of the State, which no subversive project can avoid confronting. And, from the traditions of councilism and anarchosindicalism, we still have the examples of unity, direct democracy and autonomy. The groups that share these minimal libertarian and councilist demands—the autonomous groups—must shed light on the current condition of the working class which will help to catalyze a really social, anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian movement, and this task is mainly (although not exclusively) theoretical. In any case, militant activism must not entrench itself in a position that corresponds to a particular stage of debate and social struggle on the part of the oppressed and the disadvantaged. The function of an autonomous group is to contribute to a higher degree of consciousness of grievances and oppression, which would tend to materialize in the creation of more or less formal organizations of self-defense. The only goal towards which such groups can aspire is that of arousing the self-organization of social dissidence in the course of struggles that will not fail to arise. These struggles are their medium and only in them must they seek their examples. Only on the basis of these struggles will a movement of economic, political and social secession be capable of emerging, a movement that will finish off capitalism and the State: two words, but one thing.

Miguel Amorós.

Notes for a talk given at the *Ateneo Popular de Alcorcón* (Madrid), February 28, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Autonomía obrera, anarcosindicalismo, anarquismo”**

March 2015

## A look at the past: the revolutionary career of Joaquín Pérez

“That’s the way my life is,  
stone, like you. Like you,  
little stone  
like you,  
little stone, that maybe was made  
only for a slingshot...”  
León Felipe

|

Some people think that memory is nothing other than preparation for death, but for those who are not afraid of death such an arrangement will not disturb their serenity in their last moments, even in exile. Montaigne thought that “*Nature has taught us to think about death only when the time comes to die*”. It is better to look back, to the life of the past. The memory of the exiles is a return to their places of origin, but without bitterness, because those who were illuminated by ideals of freedom never felt defeated or disillusioned. They made good use of their lives, and to lose them was no big deal; they departed content, not weighed down with a lot of baggage, without worries. With a person’s death, however, something of the past of the collective of which that person formed a part also dies, the class epic that should be preserved: it is the moral legacy of a generation of “*anonymous fighters*”. In the home stretch of life a powerful sense of the approaching end arises, and its rapid onset causes one to make haste to put down in writing the testament of the revolt, the legacy that one’s natural heirs will receive. That is why, in London, between 1995 and 1996, I urged a mild-mannered, retired anarchist, Joaquín Pérez (1907-2006), to record his adventures and ideals in a memoir; his title was *Un Relato Patético* [A Tragic Account]. Someone close to him was dealt a blow by fate; this served as a warning and a spur, for “*disasters happen when one least expects them*”. On December 4, 1994, his companion Carmen suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed on the right side of her body, and although she could still hear, she could no longer speak. She was practically immobilized, walking only with the aid of a cane, and only for a few minutes at a time. Joaquín, who was 88 years



old at the time, was having trouble with his eyesight and his legs would not always obey him, until the time came when he could not leave his home to buy what he needed at the neighborhood stores because he was afraid that he would get dizzy and collapse. Carmen had to do everything and now she had to take care of him, too, as his condition deteriorated. In the spring of 1998 Carmen was no longer able to walk. Luckily they were not alone, left to the mercy of nurses and homecare aides; their daughter Violeta provided invaluable help during those last turns of the wheel of life. During this bleak time he exchanged letters with his surviving comrades: Félix Álvarez Arenas and his son, Germinal, in Toulouse; Floreal Rodríguez, in Alicante; Francisco Piqueras, in Barcelona; despite the fact that *“every three or four lines that I wrote my eyes clouded over as if with a fog, and I had to get up from my chair, in order to begin again later”*. But if he could no longer rely on his head, his legs were even less reliable. It could be said without exaggeration that it was ideals, more than anything else, that sustained him.

Joaquín had devoted his entire life to the “idea”, to anarchy, that social phenomenon that is manifested, as Elisée Reclus recalls:

“Wherever sincere men rebelling against imposed rules of any kind, voluntarily unite mutually to teach one another and to reconquer part of their lives and satisfy their own needs without masters.”

The “idea” gave meaning to his life and the Spanish Revolution of 1936 was its last appearance in history. Recalling the revolutionary civil war, *“that open struggle worth remembering, which no one can erase”*, and the experience of libertarian communism that he was there to enjoy in Pina and Gelsa, Joaquín rendered homage to *“all those brave Spanish and foreign anarchist comrades who, each and every one, died for the freedom of the world”*. Today’s rulers *“do not want anyone to know that we workers defeated the military”*. And thus, ignorance of these feats implies *“a disgrace and a setback for young people”*, those of today and those of tomorrow, the legitimate heirs of an example that *“must serve as a beacon”*. According to the stalwart judgment of Joaquín, the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists were the vanguard of that revolution, which was ruined by the perfidy of a corrupt and dictatorial republican government, the counterrevolutionary and criminal activities of the communists, and, finally, due to the betrayal of the leaders of the CNT and the FAI, who not only beheld all this and remained silent, but collaborated: *“the most suitable word I can find to depict this false step of the collaborationists is BETRAYAL”*. The truth will out; everything must be known *“so that the new generations will not allow themselves to be duped”*. Joaquín asks himself, and answers with sorrow: *“Did we realize we were carrying out the Revolution? No! A thousand times no! And the fact is that if*

*we were to have realized it, another world would have dawned*". This failure was a millstone around the neck of the workers that they are still paying for:

"We were so naive that we thought that we had everything in our hands and that now we were the tough guys. No one escaped the defeat of the Revolution. Maybe those of us who were at the fronts, fighting fascism with all our might. But in the rearguard neither the leaders nor the militants escaped; the former because they were traitors and the latter because they consented to the betrayal."

The libertarians surrendered right at the beginning by attributing all responsibility for this betrayal to the circumstances of the war, and then they could not stop. The sincere anarchists, trapped between the dictates of their ideology and the collaborationism of their leaders, did not react decisively enough. An accumulation of deceptions, acts of cowardice, betrayals and usurpations put an end to that incredible proletarian achievement. And then:

"the worst punishment that could have been inflicted on the working class, is the fact that an occasion such as was presented to us by that unparalleled July 19th of 1936, might not ever arise again for another five hundred years!"<sup>1</sup>

Fate had ordained that Joaquín would decide to write his memoirs too late, when, due to his advanced age, his memory was unreliable and his account of the past was riddled with gaps. Luis Monferrar, an occasional collaborator who charged Joaquín a fee for his work, could hardly help him, since he knew almost nothing about anarchism and the civil war. His friend, Piqueras, who was also old and ill, and who was just as much of an autodidact as Joaquín, could only transcribe his imprecise account and proofread it at home, without verifying the accuracy of the details or even situating them in their context. During the summer of 2003 I attempted to interview Joaquín at his home in the London neighborhood of Islington, but despite the pleasure he experienced in speaking of The Friends of Durruti, the effort involved in doing so was very painful for him and after a few minutes I had to leave him in peace. In any event, Joaquín left a trail of biographical details dispersed among the numerous lines that connected the six or seven episodes whose narration he considered essential. It must also be pointed out that his written accounts and interviews displayed an excess of rhetoric and an absence of introspection. Joaquín did not talk much about himself. Among anarchists, a certain kind of class modesty is not unusual, which has a tendency to situate the collective above the individual. The individual only matters as a representative of the social group to which he belongs. His childhood, his adolescent friendships, his doubts, his moral

---

<sup>1</sup> Joaquín Pérez Navarro, "Un Relato Patético" (manuscript). An English language translation of this "memoir" has been published: Joaquín Pérez Navarro and Luis Monferrar, *One Man's War in Spain: Trickery, Treachery and Thievery*, tr. Paul Sharkey, Christie Books, London, 2013 [Translator's Note].

struggles, his feelings, his tastes, his loves, his personal sacrifices, etc., pertain to the private world, against which we should not trespass. The dramatic tension took place outside of private life, in society. With regard to this point, anarchist morality is light years ahead of bourgeois morality. In accordance with his convictions, Joaquín would speak only of his revolt against tyranny, of the collective drama in which he played a role, of the long exile as a militant that was his fate, and above all of “the idea”, the instrument of freedom for which nothing is spared, the lever of the social revolution and the real protagonist of his history. The pamphlet, “Towards a New Revolution”, by The Friends of Durruti, would be included in his “memoirs” and would appear in *Cenit*, the journal of the libertarian exile community in Toulouse, and would have served as his testament if his own account had not been written.

||

Joaquín Pérez Navarro was born on August 4, 1907 in Los Calpes, a village in the municipality of Puebla del Arenoso, county of Alto Mijares, province of Castellón. His parents, modest peasants, had three children: Joaquín, the eldest, a disabled younger son, and a daughter. The family possessed a few parcels of dry land that did not produce enough to support its needs, so its members had to work hard to get by. The death of Joaquín’s father was a serious moral and economic setback. Joaquín was only eight years old when he was forced to go to work:

“in a little village like that you did not have a day off, you were always working with the men, with the horses, working on the land to provide for the household ... before I left the village for good I had already gone to Aragon to work as a harvester — with a team of men! — earning the same wage as the men, when I was fourteen years old, working from morning to night with a scythe, and they would not let me leave...”<sup>2</sup>

The situation of the family was becoming ever more desperate and his mother decided to move the family to Barcelona. At this point, as so often in his memoirs, the date is uncertain: did they move to Barcelona in 1919, or was it in 1921? It was a big change; from almond orchards to narrow streets full of people, odors, noise, poverty.... They took an apartment on Miguel Ángel Street, in the Sants neighborhood. His mother and sister went to work as servants in bourgeois homes and Joaquín found a job as a laborer in the construction industry, working with bricklayers: “*At the age of sixteen I was already a member of the CNT, a defender of the cause of the workers*”. While still an adolescent, Joaquín joined the National Confederation of Labor sometime

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview conducted by Luis Monferrer with Joaquín Pérez, London, July 1988.

around 1923, probably the construction workers trade union. It was in that year that the conflict between the CNT and the employers reached a peak of intensity with the assassination of Salvador Seguí, the most popular figure in the history of the Catalanian proletariat, if we except Durruti. Class trade unionism had become a major problem, so that the Catalanian bourgeoisie, with the consent of the King, attempted to suppress it by encouraging the military to carry out a coup d'état. This meant the outlawing of the CNT and the persecution of its militants. It also led to split in the ranks of the CNT, because, in order to survive under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, some leaders attempted to adapt to its laws and institutions, and ended up establishing a *modus vivendi* with the liberal political forces. In the meantime, Joaquín got a job in the kitchen at Trink-Hall, a high-class bar and restaurant located on The Ramblas — at the corner of Conde del Asalto. One of his cousins, from the same village and almost the same age as he was — born in 1908 — Marcelino Benedicto Navarro, also emigrated to Barcelona, where he got a job as a waiter, and the two of them struck up a friendship so close that only death would separate them.

In 1930, when Berenguer replaced Primo de Rivera, the CNT was once again legalized. The trade unions reorganized and Joaquín probably became a member of the gastronomic trade union, or the trade union of the food service industry, as it was also called. Released from police harassment, the trade unions presented their demands to the employers, not hesitating to propose strikes that annoyed their leaders, who had made deals with the politicians. Joaquín briefly recounts that he thought the “reformists” had their good points and their bad points. The Manifesto of the Treinta expressed the protest of this sector, and the situation was aggravated by the lukewarm support given by the reformists to the insurrection of the miners in Llobregat, and by the socialist vote to sentence the workers taken prisoner during the insurrection to deportation to Guinea. From that point on, *since 1932*, Joaquín became a “syndicalist of action” who was “*always involved in all the clashes and strike movements that took place in Barcelona*”. Juan García Oliver tells us that in 1932 he was establishing a structure of defense groups and committees for future insurrections, in which Joaquín was certainly involved. The leading man of action, however, with whom Joaquín was acquainted at the time, might not have been García Oliver, but Progreso Ródenas — the man who assassinated Bravo Portillo, a legend among libertarians, with a long history of clashes with the employers’ *pistoleros*, exile and life as a fugitive — for in 1932 and again in 1933 he met with his group at the home of his sister, Libertad Ródenas, the companion of José Viadiu, a syndicalist who was a very close associate of the

assassinated Salvador Seguí. The group was composed of Joaquín, a person named Casas — perhaps Luis Casas Cazorlas, twenty years old, a bricklayer, born in Santa Cruz, in Almería — someone named Casanovas and José Pérez, a name that was too common to be able to identify this person with certainty. It is possible that his cousin Marcelino was also involved in this group, since he was later implicated in a weapons charge for which he was sentenced in April 1932<sup>3</sup>. The organization of the defense committees was completed in December and Joaquín worked with the “sewer detachment” led by Ricardo Sanz, who was responsible for installing several oxygen tanks full of dynamite in the drainpipes under the General Office for Security, on the Vía Layetana. In his book, Piqueras points out that the group planted “*several bombs near the foundations of the Office of the Police Chief*”<sup>4</sup>, a mission that was undoubtedly connected with the preparations for the movement of January 8, 1933. The press, however, mentioned the throwing of bombs at the main door, which blasted an enormous hole in the building<sup>5</sup>.

The insurrection was aborted with the arrest of the revolutionary committee that was supposed to lead it. It took place anyway, leaving a trail of deaths and arrests. The massacre of Casas Viejas outraged not only the confederal militants, but also the constituencies that supported the government. On the other hand, the insurrectional dynamic merely widened the gap between the “*treintistas*” and the “*faistas*”, leaving the Organization practically split after the March Plenum. Despite the fact that nine thousand of their members were in jail, the trade unions continued to stage wildcat strikes, which Azaña attempted to break by transferring the responsibility for public order to the Generalitat. From that moment on, the Generalitat was the enforcer for the bourgeoisie, closing trade union offices and working class cultural centers, arresting militants and mobilizing strikebreakers. The CNT needed a display of force to fend off the wave of repression unleashed by the Government and the Generalitat with the support of the socialists. Piqueras relates that Joaquín, “*whenever there was a rally, whether at the Monumental arena or the Olympia Theater, never failed to attend. He packed his lunch and went to listen to his comrades*”. On September 22 he had a chance to attend the first such rally, at the Monumental arena, held to demand the release of the social prisoners. The attendance at the rally exceeded the expectations of the Organization, with eighty thousand workers packing the arena, demonstrating that the CNT was the only force that was really capable of confronting the bourgeoisie and the

---

<sup>3</sup> *La Vanguardia*, April 30, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Francisco Piqueras, *El luchador anónimo* [The Anonymous Fighter], self-published, August 2001.

<sup>5</sup> See *La Vanguardia*, January 10 and 11, 1933.

State. The speakers denounced the “Monarchist” laws promulgated by the Republic, such as the law of April 8, the law of Public Order and the law of Vagrants and Miscreants, calling for their repeal; they recalled that Durruti, Ascaso and Combina were prisoners in the jail at Santa María, and reminded the workers of the attack on the municipal council of Tarrasa and the peasants who were murdered at Casas Viejas; they denounced “*treintismo*” as cowardly and capitulationist, and criticized the great lie of bourgeois democracy, ready at any moment to transform itself into a dictatorship whenever the people rebelled. The speakers warned of the danger of an even more violent reaction as the bourgeois solution to the crisis, to prevent the proletariat from launching the revolution and establishing libertarian communism <sup>6</sup>. Joaquín had to leave late that night, impressed. The rally was the ideal means to transmit the confederal strategy to the whole working class, and was as pedagogical as it was propagandistic. As for Joaquín’s group, it began to work on a plan to rescue the prisoners from the Modelo prison.

By October Joaquín had made contact with the Modelo prisoners who had conceived of the breakout plan, Adolfo Ballano and Pedro Campón, who had been arrested for a robbery at the Oro del Rhin café. Joaquín’s group had obtained a map of the Barcelona sewer system, which depicted the sewer lines that passed beneath the prison, and they soon began to work on digging a tunnel. The prisoners, for their part, began to excavate their end of the tunnel in a first floor cell in Cell Block Three, disposing of the soil by flushing it down the toilets or by depositing it in the prison’s garbage truck, or else they dumped it in an unused cell block of the prison. Meanwhile, Joaquín had become acquainted with those who would later form The Friends of Durruti Group: he already knew Pablo Ruiz; Antonio Pérez and José Paniagua were confidential associates of Progreso, who also introduced him to Jaime Balias, the editor of *Tierra y Libertad*. He later met Félix Martínez, a daring hold-up artist, and a skilled automobile driver, who on various occasions acted as the group’s chauffeur. The environment was tense; the political crisis had risen on the crest of the opposition to Lerroux, an old populist demagogue who was secretly allied with the agrarian right wing and the military conspirators. A victory for his party would have implied the rise of the Spanish fascism against which the CNT promised a revolutionary response that would bypass the voting booths. The electoral question was the most important point of friction with the political parties, because, with the elections just around the corner, the “Left”, the socialists, the communists and the *treintistas* feared that the abstentionist tactic

---

<sup>6</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, September 23, 1933.

of the libertarians would frustrate their parliamentary hopes. A huge rally would make everything clear. Once again, the CNT assembled the proletariat in the Monumental stadium, which was filled to capacity, to speak of amnesty, abstention and the fascist threat. The rally was attended by one hundred thousand people, who came from every corner of Catalonia to listen to the speakers set forth their analyses of the situation and to proclaim the maximum demands of the workers. Durruti garnered clamorous applause, especially when he said that :

“There is another university, the one attended by those who get up at six in the morning; the factory where we learned to work; we are wise men with tools in our hands. We will not allow anyone to tell us that because we do not know how to read we do not have the right to emancipate ourselves, to conclude with the statement that the CNT is not going to conquer Parliament, it is going to conquer the factory.”

Valeriano Orobón Fernández, the leading theoretician and strategist of the confederal Organization, also spoke at the rally, serving as a counterpoint to Durruti’s address. He concluded his speech with the following maxims:

“Those who vote, help the State; The CNT has won the elections outside of the ballot boxes; The social question is a question of force.”<sup>7</sup>

The other speakers did not disappoint the crowd and the rally ended with “Vivas” for the social revolution and libertarian communism. The morale of the working class rose to such a pitch that it could not wait to go on strike. On November 18, the day before the elections, with Joaquín trying to enlarge the diameter of the sewer and divert the flow of the water so that the escapees would not be drenched, the Transport Workers Trade Union went out on strike without notifying the Local Federation. Some trade unions then joined the strike and a few days later the department of Public Order of the Generalitat mobilized thousands of “*escamots*” [strikebreakers who were members of the paramilitary youth gangs of the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, the Catalan Republican Left] from among the *Juventudes de Esquerra* in order to keep the subways, the trolleys and the buses running. The clashes between the separatists under Miquel Badia and the syndicalists culminated in a hail of gunfire. Two years later, Badia would pay for his actions. On December 2, a “state of emergency” was declared throughout Spain in order to facilitate the transfer of power to the Lerroix government, the local offices of the CNT trade unions were closed and the daily newspaper of the CNT, *Solidaridad Obrera*, was shut down. The trolleys were militarized; they were driven by marines and escorted by strikebreakers and Assault Guards. The victory of the right wing parties forced the CNT to fulfill its promises, unleashing an

---

<sup>7</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, November 7, 1933.

insurrection on December 8 whose minor impact in Barcelona led to the abrupt end of the strike.

The embers of the workers uprising were hardly quenched when, on December 12, the mass prison breakout prepared by Joaquín's group took place. A total of fifty-eight prisoners escaped, men who had been convicted of sabotage, picketing, expropriations, involvement in the events at Tarrasa, and participation in the most recent insurrection. Some were outstanding anarchist activists, such as Justo Bueno and Lucio Ruano; others, like Alfonso Nieves, were writers associated with the FAI. Two escape routes were prepared, one by way of Calabria Street and another through a vacant lot next to the Maternity Hospital. The emergence of the prisoners from the sewer manholes in the street attracted the attention of bystanders and someone notified the Civil Guards, who were able to capture some of the prisoners as they exited the sewer and also arrested some totally innocent people who were at the scene as onlookers. The escape caused a sensation and the president of the Supreme Court himself, Anguera de Sojo, the future minister of the most backwards reactionary tendency, appointed a special examining magistrate and placed him at the head of the commission of inquiry. The guards of Cell Block Three and the Prison Warden were relieved of their duties and put on trial<sup>8</sup>. The four "*quijotes*" did not wait very long before they undertook a second adventure. The transport strike had failed, and one hundred and fifty trolley drivers and conductors had been fired, and the new employees had no recourse in the face of executives strengthened and protected by the authorities. The criticisms of the *treintistas* who pointed out the mistake of having linked the strike to the insurrection opened up old wounds<sup>9</sup>. The Transport Workers Trade Union elected to utilize a tactic of sabotage, shootings and assaults on the company executives. Joaquín's group was informed that the Director of the Trolley Company lived in a house located on the grounds of one of the trolley depots, in the Horta neighborhood, and the group decided to teach him a lesson. Only one member of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI was notified of the plan. The mission was carried out on May 26, underground, by way of the sewer system, which was Joaquín's area of expertise, until the team reached the foundations of the Director's house. They devised a kind of trolley to carry the dynamite, which was quite heavy. Once below the house, they planted a cauldron filled with thirty kilos of explosives, and, forty meters away, at the trolley garage, in the painting workshop, they left another cauldron packed with another twenty-five

---

<sup>8</sup> *La Vanguardia*, December 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1933.

<sup>9</sup> "Un comentario al conflicto del transporte público y urbano" [Observations on the Conflict in Urban Public Transport], *Sindicalismo*, December 6, 1933.



kilos of explosives, connected to the first bomb. They concealed the fuses and before leaving, they lit them. The explosions were felt throughout almost the entire city. Joaquín, who, on the day after the bombing, went to the trolley depot to see the results, beheld the roofs of the trolleys blown off, with some wrecked trolley cars still burning<sup>10</sup>. As for the home of the Director of the Trolley Company, *“it had collapsed as if by magic; his bed hung from the wall like a painting, which was certainly a source of entertainment for passersby”*<sup>11</sup>. The Company, however, did not yield, and the sabotage campaign continued through the summer.

The CNT was exhausted and isolated, and the question of the “workers alliance” with the UGT and the schismatic reformist trade unions gave rise to bitter polemics. In Catalonia, basically due to the presence among the conspirators of representatives of the Esquerra, the CNT’s bitter enemy during its most recent battles, the Catalanian Regional Committee abstained from participating in the insurrection of October 1934, while the Asturian Regional Committee of the CNT did just the opposite and joined the insurrection; yet the Catalanian CNT was not thereby exempted from the subsequent wave of persecution. Nonetheless, in Barcelona, the trolley workers strike continued without concern for the political events of the moment; the trolley depots at the Plaza Lesseps were burned, various traffic signals were destroyed, and there were some tragic shootings. An action group stopped a trolley on Carolinas Street, ordered the passengers to evacuate the trolley, and then set it on fire, sending it careening through the Paseo de Gracia without stopping, until it crashed into the Telephone Exchange Building. Shocked by such audacity, Gil Robles, the Minister of War, declared a state of emergency. In 1935 the CNT had more of its militants imprisoned than all the other working class organizations combined and it started to become aware of the impossibility of carrying out the revolution without the help of other forces. The CNT therefore engaged in an effort to try to open up lines of communication with the other organizations, to which the CNT directed timid rectifications or clarifications, for the purpose of freeing the prisoners. Joaquín was always very careful and although Piqueras mentioned that he spent some time in the Modelo, if this was really true, it was merely a minor incident. The instability of the right wing governments allowed the CNT to emerge from clandestinity at the end of the year to demonstrate against the death penalty and to demand amnesty in several rallies at the Olympia Theater. At these rallies, Joaquín heard Durruti,

---

<sup>10</sup> *La Vanguardia*, May 27, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> *Un Relato Patético*.

Combina, Ascaso, García Oliver and Carreño reaffirm anarchist ideals and exhort the audience to prepare to meet the fascist threat, for, now that the “democratic” stage had concluded, the Spanish reactionaries were making great strides towards a military coup. In his neighborhood, Sants, Joaquín participated in the Defense Committee and awaited the time for action.



Barricades in Barcelona, circa 1936.

### III

On July 19, “*all the confederal and anarchist defense groups of the city of Barcelona spent two days without sleeping, patrolling and guarding all the strategic positions for entry into and exit from the city...*”. Armed only with clubs, pistols, shotguns and hand-made grenades, the men and women of the Committee of Sants, together with the Libertarian Youth of the neighborhood Cultural Center [Ateneo], 17- and 18-year-old boys, went to fight a company of infantry coming from the Pedralbes Barracks. The soldiers were equipped with a seven-inch artillery piece that they aimed at the groups of people that surrounded them, shouting, in order to deceive them, “Viva la República! Viva España!” When this unit reached the Gran Vía, groups of workers engaged them in an exchange of gunfire from the openings of the cross-streets on both sides of the avenue. It did not take long for the company of soldiers to come to a halt and then disperse, as they began to fraternize with the crowd and surrender their weapons. Upon its departure from the Paseo de Gracia, the armed workers from Sants turned left

with their recently conquered artillery piece and arrived at the gates of a monastery, close to the Pedrera building, which they attacked. They found the monks hiding in the cellar, alongside recently buried corpses. Later, they returned to Sants to suppress a rebel stronghold in a church close to the trolley depot. When they entered the church the fascists had fled by way of a secret passage that led to the train tracks <sup>12</sup>. Without paying any attention to the deliberations of the meetings of the responsible committees and leading militants of the CNT and the FAI, the combatants of the previous day, almost without recovering from their fatigue, departed for Aragon with Durruti and liberated Caspe, Candós, Bujaraloz, and Pina y Gelsa. Joaquín finally got to know Durruti! Behind the front, the dilemma of whether to declare libertarian communism or collaborate with the Generalitat was resolved in favor of the latter option. The complete victory of the workers had lasted only forty-eight hours.

The offensive was stalled at Osera. Durruti had received the order from Barcelona not to continue his advance until the columns proceeding up the left bank of the Ebro caught up to his units, but these columns were brought to a halt before the defenses of Quinto and Belchite. The Durruti Column devoted itself to organizing its units into centuries and platoons, and, in order to avoid the dangers of inactivity, the Column engaged in work related to the social question in the countryside. One of Durruti's units would offer the land of the *caciques* [rich landowners] to the people so that they could cultivate it collectively. Joaquín played a significant role in the construction of libertarian communism in Pina y Gelsa, which had arisen from the mutual commitment and solidarity of the militiamen and the peasants: "*There I was with my rifle, and when there was no danger, you saw me working alongside the peasants, reaping wheat, or pulling weeds, or digging potatoes...*" <sup>13</sup>. The meetings attended by peasants and militiamen, the explanation of anarcho-communist principles, the allotment of tasks, barter, etc., was an experience which Joaquín participated in with great joy. Indeed, the militiamen of the Food Service Workers Trade Union formed a group they called "*Acción y Alegría*" [Action and Joy]. It was "*composed exclusively of comrades*" <sup>14</sup>, that is, of anarchists, sixty-two in number, all of whom joined the Column before September. Its delegate was Antonio Pérez Valera, the comrade in arms of Progreso Ródenas, and its members included Joaquín Pérez and Marcelino Benedicto, according to a report signed by Antonio himself and the assistant delegate for statistics,

---

<sup>12</sup> Interview with the author, August 8, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Interview conducted by Luis Monferrer.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Eduardo Cerveró to Diego Camacho, dated July 21, 1972, consulted at the Ascaso-Durruti Foundation of Montpellier.

Francisco Jorrín <sup>15</sup>. The group was assigned to a post at the *Meandro de Belloque* [a bend in the Ebro River], near Kilometer 40 of the railway line, facing Quinto, from which its members kept watch on the movements of the enemy and dug two lines of trenches. In November the group had a total of ninety militiamen, manning the trenches and observation posts <sup>16</sup>. Joaquín repeatedly claimed that he was a member of Century 21, which is consistent with the fact that the Fifth Group, to which that Century belonged, occupied the roads near the Ebro between Pina and Gelsa, and Belloque was between these towns. The Fourth Group was posted at Gelsa; its delegate was Pablo Ruiz, assisted by a committee of war featuring Progreso, Eduardo Cerveró, José Paniagua and the young José Alba Albert, a mechanic. Felix Martínez joined this committee later. Their comrades in action, José Pérez and Luis Casas, were also members of the Centuries. The International Group was posted on the other side of Gelsa, in Velilla. Given the position they occupied, the military efforts of these units were focused on Quinto, which they shelled with two mobile batteries of artillery when they had munitions. The shortage of arms and ammunition was cruelly felt in this sector and Joaquín recounts that Century 21, around November, sent a letter to Largo Caballero demanding arms. At that time, militarization was the Sword of Damocles that was poised over their heads. Most militiamen rejected militarization and Durruti, shortly before his famous radio address, signed a declaration echoing the general sentiment of his Column.

The CNT's entry into the Government, with four Ministers, was a hard blow for the revolutionary militants:

“organizations that had always fought against all kinds of governments with the same weapons that those governments employed against them — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth — folded.”

For Joaquín this capitulation discredited the libertarians in the eyes of the world's revolutionaries:

“I was always against that false step by which political collaboration was accepted. In just a few days, the CNT became just another party, subject to the “order and command” of the Government of the Spanish Republic.”

And Joaquín angrily claimed that:

“by accepting political collaboration in the name of anarchism, it became quite clear that our reason for existence, our defense, was handed over, bound hand and foot, to our enemies, and all for a handful of Ministerial positions...”

---

<sup>15</sup> Roster of the group Acción y Alegría in PS Aragon, documents of the Durruti Column, CDMH of Salamanca.

<sup>16</sup> This information is derived from a report generated by Franco's espionage service, “Columnas rojas” [Red Columns], AGMAV, 2N C.1299.

He spares no insults in his denunciation of the "Superior Committees of the Organization": traitors, vultures, sellouts, altar boys.... It is understood that, once the CNT was inside the Government, the militarization of the confederal columns would not take long, especially after the death of Durruti. In Gelsa, they could not believe it; an army, even if popular, was still an army, and therefore a threat to the Revolution. Even if the war was won, things would stay the same; the Revolution would be in abeyance. But returning to the rearguard was not a good decision if a way could be found to stay at the front: in Gelsa they spoke of irregulars and guerrilla units. But "*for some comrades this idea caught their fancy, especially for those who aspired to obtain a high level officer's commission*" (*Un Relato Patético*). As the advocates of militarization, supported by the leading militants of the superior committees, gained ground, more and more militiamen deserted. Pressure was exerted, and bribes were offered; Joaquín was offered Captain's stars by a certain Martorell, who worked for the military committee of the Column, if he would join the new Division. He responded by saying that "*you can take your stars and shove them up your ass*". The Fourth Group, the International Group and the Action and Joy Group published their counter-proposal for groups, infantry groups, squads and sections, in a leaflet dated January 8, 1937, Gelsa. The opinion of the majority opposed to hierarchical ranks was as follows:

"It would be childish to think that militarization does not bear the seed of disaster, since it is subordination, negation, and, frankly, before we are soldiers we are men. If by chance we were to carry out an assessment of the past, we would see that with inferior arms we defeated a powerful modern army that needs foreign support to continue the war. The only thing we need is the offensive weaponry that will make victory possible.

We have an elevated concept of responsibility that is notoriously incompatible with that military mentality that is fatally leading us to a dictatorship, which as conscious and responsible men we must prevent. If we do not accepting militarization, it is because it conceals such an imminent threat that, if one does not perceive it, it is only because one exists under the influence of the war. Winning the war does not mean winning the revolution. If we win the war and we establish a basis for a new militarism, we shall fall into the vice of bourgeois society that in order to live has been compelled to construct the monolith of an omnipotent and tyrannical State.

For us, conscious men, militarism is the supreme manifestation of the State. And since we are against the State, we must therefore reject militarization.

We accept military technology and strategy, but not militarization, regardless of its form.”<sup>17</sup>

The superior committees of the CNT and the FAI threatened the anti-militarists of the Aragon Front that if they did not change their attitude they would face the worst consequences. The militiamen in Gelsa responded on January 16 with another manifesto, which was also signed by the Action and Joy Group, in which they reaffirmed their positions and pointed out that the problem was not rooted in the organization, but in the lack of war materiel. And not even that problem would be guaranteed to be solved with militarization. They told the superior committees that their proposals for reorganization of the militias would vindicate them with regard to the historical responsibility they assumed by rejecting militarization<sup>18</sup>. For Joaquín, Zaragoza was lost because “*at the only opportune moment the necessary armaments were lacking*”. Not only was it necessary to reject militarization, but the war, as well; he was in favor of “*guerrilla war, working behind the enemy’s lines, destroying bridges, highways, barracks, airfields, railroads, factories, power plants and gas lines, reservoirs, etc.*” (*Un Relato Patético*). They won the support of various Centuries of the Column and a wide array of groups in the rearguard, and played their last card when their representatives appeared before the Plenum of Confederal and Libertarian Columns convoked in Valencia by the Iron Column. A procedural maneuver on the part of the National Committee prevented its delegates from speaking, and it was finally clear for all those present that the rejection of militarization was a lost cause. The Iron Column voted to return to the rearguard and hold a general assembly to examine the implications of the decision that had been imposed on them. The Fourth Group, the Action and Joy Group, about half of the International Group and a handful of Centuries were in favor of abandoning the Front, but not without taking two machine guns along with them. Joaquín, Marcelino and José Pérez boarded one of the two trucks commissioned to take them to Barcelona, penetrating the checkpoints manned by the communists by means of the simple expedient of driving right through them. If they were returning to the rearguard it was for the purpose of continuing the struggle, and therefore, instead of trying to convince everyone around them of the correctness of their position, they issued an appeal for regrouping in a new organization, one that would be faithful to the principles of the CNT and the

---

<sup>17</sup> “A los compañeros de las columnas confederales. Lo que opinamos la mayoría de los compañeros de la Columna Durruti” [To the comrades of the confederal columns. The position of the majority of the comrades of the Durruti Column].

<sup>18</sup> “A todos los compañeros: A las columnas confederales. El problema de la militarización” [To all comrades: To the confederal columns. The question of militarization].

FAI which their leaders had abandoned, an organization that they called The Friends of Durruti.

Joaquín confessed that the interest that informed the decision to return to the rearguard was that of warning the working people about the counterrevolution that, led by the communists, was advancing irresistibly in the face of the passivity of the Committees: *"In ten months of war we lost ninety percent of what we had achieved on July 19"*. In March The Friends of Durruti Group was formed, Félix Martínez was named President, and Jaime Balias, the only prestigious intellectual in the Group, was appointed to the position of Vice President. Balias placed the evening newspaper, *La Noche*, for which he served as editor in chief, at the service of the revolutionary cause. Joaquín pointed out that: *"over the course of twelve days more than six hundred comrades joined the Group — I am sure of this — all of them members of the CNT and the FAI"*. The Friends of Durruti were *"the mustard seed, the real revolutionaries of the indestructible temple, the most loyal devotees of direct action and social justice"* (*Un Relato Patético*). Its rising fortunes reached their limit in the May Days. It was the only opposition faction that had a program and had a grasp of what had to be done and what should not be done. Right after the attempt by the Assault Guards to seize the Telephone Exchange, the streets of Barcelona were once again filled with barricades. Joaquín, José Pérez and other comrades took a machine gun and departed from the office of The Friends of Durruti, at the corner of Las Ramblas and Hospital Street, in order to open fire at the Assault Guards who had occupied the Plaza de Cataluña. On the next day, four companies of the Republican National Guard, the former Civil Guard, *"the most hardcore force in favor of tyranny"*, left their barracks with the mission of occupying the radio station on Las Ramblas and neutralizing away any barricades they encountered along the way. They opened fire on anything that moved, whether or not they were insurrectionaries. Joaquín and his comrades, with a group from the Central Defense Committee, halted the progress of the company that was heading down the Gran Vía towards the Plaza de Cataluña, forcing it to retreat towards the Plaza de España. The others had been expelled from the Ronda and from the Paralelo and took refuge wherever they could. The seventy Assault Guards who tried to hide in the Cine América had to try to escape on foot and try to reach the Casarramona Barracks. On the night of May 4, Joaquín, Progreso and the people of Sants went to that Barracks with the intention of definitively neutralizing the Civil Guards. *"After six minutes they broke out the white flag, and opened the doors of the Barracks"*. The attackers arrived at the guard post of the Civil Guards in an automobile. In the barracks they seized weapons and uniforms. Joaquín insinuated that forty-eight Civil

Guards were executed in an abandoned lot, but if there were reprisals, it is clear that there were no more than twenty victims. On the morning of May 7, the Sants Defense Committee, obeying the directives of the superior committees, released two hundred thirty Civil Guards. It is to be assumed that the corpses of the executed Civil Guards were discovered, since the press pointed out that some of the bodies were hung up on display in a lecture hall in the Medical School. On May 10 they were buried <sup>19</sup>.

Everyone knows how the May Days concluded; the leaders of the CNT and the FAI, especially the Government Ministers García Oliver and Montseny, shouted themselves hoarse with their repeated cries, Cease Fire! Almost by accident, the victory of the workers was transformed into a defeat. For Joaquín the treason of the Organization's leaders was obvious: "*The 'superior' committees of the CNT-FAI were betraying the revolution won by the people*". This is how The Friends of Durruti expressed it in a pamphlet distributed to hundreds of people, a pamphlet that would earn them countless accusations of being provocateurs, *incontrolados* and fascists. While the members of the POUM "*acted as if they were members of the CNT*", Federica Montseny and García Oliver forfeited all their moral authority in the eyes of the militants. Joaquín thought that they were in the hands of Largo Caballero or the Soviets, and he even discussed with other comrades the advisability of taking a shot at the Minister of Justice. The popularity of The Friends of Durruti after the May Days began to be a matter of serious concern for the leaders of the libertarian movement who, fearing a split, disavowed them and attempted to expel them from the Organization, not without slandering them in every conceivable way. The Trade Unions reacted with studied ambiguity; on the one hand, they obeyed the cease-fire directives of the Committees; on the other hand, however, they refused to expel the members of the Group, protecting them from the rush to judgment on the part of the Negrín Government, which outlawed the Group. The situation would deteriorate, however, more rapidly than the revolutionaries expected. They quietly buried their murdered comrades; investigations were conducted concerning secret grave-sites, special tribunals were created, a Military Investigation Service was organized, the Control Patrols and the Defense Committees were dissolved, and the forces of public order multiplied in the rearguard; raids on libertarian headquarters proliferated, along with interference with the collectives, assassinations at the front, and the persecution of anarchists and members of the POUM.... Joaquín reflected bitterly:

---

<sup>19</sup> *La Vanguardia*, May 6, 8 and 11, 1937.



“With the May Events the Revolution was definitively lost, as a result of the fact that no one knew how to carry it out; the morale of the people dissolved and with it the fronts began to collapse...” (*Un Relato Patético*)

During the summer, the counterrevolution hardly paused for breath: The *cenetista* leadership renounced its principles and goals in favor of “unity” with the republican reaction and begged to be allowed to participate in the Government that presided over these defeats. The favored treasonous slogan, which originated among the Stalinists, was put into the mouth of the deceased Durruti: “*We renounce everything except victory*”. Communist domination was definitive, as the Party had almost absolute control over the crucial positions in the police and the army. In the meantime, the Modelo prison was filled with anti-fascists.

The Friends of Durruti, now driven underground, continued to publish its newspaper, *El Amigo del Pueblo*, and the groups of the Local Federation of the FAI, now in opposition to their Peninsular leadership, published a newspaper called *Anarquía*. The clandestine broadsheets had a wide circulation, saying what *Soli* [*Solidaridad Obrera*] would not dare to say. The prisoners imposed their own conditions in the prison and the Defense Committees, officially disbanded by the confederal leadership in June, were still organized and active. The same elements that prepared the provocation of May, conceived another provocation in September, to put the finishing touches on their work. On the morning of September 20, units of the First Assault Division showed up at the doors of Los Escolapios, in the Ronda de Ricardo Mella (facing San Pablo), on the pretext of carrying out a search. The former college and monastery was the headquarters of the Food Service Workers Trade Union, the Central Defense Committee, the Faros Cultural Center, and other libertarian organizations, and the real reason for the presence of the Assault Guards was clear: it was a pretext to attack the building with artillery and the tanks that the Guards brought with them. The occupants of the building prepared for resistance and the workers in the neighborhoods mobilized for battle. The rapid intervention of the Regional Committee of the CNT succeeded in preventing a working class counterattack, but the defenders of Los Escolapios did not agree to surrender. After hours of negotiations and pledges that there would be no arrests, pledges that would not be honored, the doors of Los Escolapios were opened up to the Assault Guards. They arrested twenty-six people, who were swallowed up by the legal system, while the most compromised escaped by way of a secret exit. Joaquín, who was in the building at the time, was one of the last to leave. In vain would one search for the least reference to these events in the official libertarian press. Toryho, an inveterate bureaucrat, controlled every line of *Soli*, and soon the paradoxical situation prevailed whereby, if one

wanted to be informed about something, if you could not obtain a copy of *El Amigo del Pueblo*, you would have to resort to the bourgeois press<sup>20</sup>. *Tierra y Libertad* was not backward in the matter of bowing and scraping. From then on, Joaquín tried to do the best he could to avoid arrest — did he hide in a collectivized factory like Balus, Pablo Ruiz and Marcelino Benedicto? We do not know, but he did tell us that he never returned to the front, to conceal himself in a libertarian unit, as many did in order to escape the persecutions. He remained in the rearguard until the end of the war<sup>21</sup>.

## IV

After the assault on Los Escolapios by the forces of order, we lose Joaquín's trail for fourteen months. What did he do besides go into hiding? The only thing we know is his reference to certain mysterious "missions" in Barcelona and elsewhere. Did he work for one of the "information and coordination" committees that emerged after the suppression of the defense committees? Did he join an action group to support the prisoners? We can only speculate that he remained in contact with The Friends of Durruti, that he was armed, and that whatever he did, he did it secretly. Joaquín did not live in the city, but came and went. In November 1938, he was arrested "*while passing through Barcelona, by a squad of policemen of every type, under the command of the Special Police Command, which was itself composed of the most various police agencies*" (*Un Relato Patético*), a reference to the political diversity of its components, some of which were from the CNT, even including the "chekists". He did not recall whether the headquarters of this Command was located on Córcega Street or Provenza Street. At 389 Provenza Street, between Nápoles and Sicilia Streets, there was a barracks of the Assault Guards that may have housed "special" cells working for the Soviet GPU or the SIM. At 304 Córcega Street, on the fourth floor, on the upper level, there was a much-feared cheka of the SIM that was responsible for certain "disappearances" of anti-Stalinist communists and anarchists, denounced by Katia Landau that same year<sup>22</sup>. We think it was the latter location, since Joaquín was tortured and that was one of the house "specialties". After two days of torture, when he was in very bad shape, he was taken away in an open truck, since there was no way he could escape, and brought to the Palace of Justice, where a military tribunal sentenced him to

---

<sup>20</sup> In fact, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* published the decree of the Interior Minister in their September 22, 1937 issues; *La Vanguardia* reported the arrests and the discovery of arms and uniforms in its September 30, 1937 issue.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with the author, August 8, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Katia Landau, *The Assassins of the Spanish Revolution*, published in French in 1938.

death “*in its first and then its second deliberations*”. A sentence for the illegal possession of arms was not usually so severe, although now and then the special tribunals of the Assault Guards would pronounce the ultimate penalty for the most trivial offenses. If the military court directly intervened, this was because Joaquín was declared to be an outlaw because he was a fugitive and a deserter, and this is what entailed the maximum penalty. His cousin Marcelino, concerning whom we know that he lived on Provenza Street and that he was married, had been discharged on March 12 from his job at a factory where he was working in order to be mobilized for the army<sup>23</sup>. Joaquín, who was one year older than Marcelino, must also have been served with his draft notice. At that time the rearguard was full of people who had fled from the fronts or who did not comply with their draft notices. No one was eager to go to the slaughterhouse for a government that they detested. The SIM was for the most part employed in the hunt for deserters and fugitives, but it did not usually torture them more than was necessary. This excess was reserved for the enemies of the State and of the Soviet Union. Was Joaquín one of these enemies? Joaquín did not set the record straight in the least by claiming that his only crime was that he “was an anarchist”, but Piqueras provides us with the key to the case by saying that in the cheka he was asked by “*two guards and the commanding officer, with two flashlights pointed right into his eyes, if he had participated in the preparations for an attempt on Negrín’s life*”<sup>24</sup>. All hated governments react with extreme violence to their own failures, since the latter reveal their weakness and invite retaliation. As a response to the defeats and in order to prevent a feared proletarian uprising, Negrín was trying to militarize all of society, eliminating ordinary justice and proclaiming martial law. The agents of the SIM themselves, assisted by the communists, had fabricated an assassination plot allegedly planned by POUM militants working with Franco’s secret services. The headquarters of the republican government was located in the building at the corner of Mallorca Street and the Paseo de Gracia, and Negrín always left this building with a powerful escort, against which the plot was supposed to be directed. This pretext served to justify a general strategy of intimidation, with checkpoints at every corner and systematic searches of houses and apartments. The headquarters of the CNT itself, on Vía Durruti (previously known as Vía Layetana), was raided in a search for weapons. The catastrophe of the Battle of the Ebro only increased the paranoia of power. Joaquín was captured at the worst possible time.

---

<sup>23</sup> File in PS Barcelona 75, CDMH of Salamanca.

<sup>24</sup> F. Piqueras, *El Luchador Anónimo*.

During the days he spent in the Palace of Justice, Joaquín met three “comrade” Assault Guards, all of them found guilty and one condemned to death. Before they were arrested they had served at the Castillo de Montjuich, a sinister place where those who were sentenced to death were sent, and that is where they thought Joaquín would be going. In fact, that was where he was destined to go. He arrived there:

“handcuffed to the Assault Guard who was condemned to death — he was just the way I would like the Assault Guards to be! The poor man cursed the day that he went to work for the State.”

While passing through the various offices to be searched, as the guards had advised him, he was presented to the warden, a member of the SIM and the CNT, who was not at all interested in his membership in the CNT, responding laconically: “*I am only doing my duty*”, and he was searched from head to toe. The jailor who brought him to the cell block at gunpoint was also a member of the CNT. When he entered the “tube”:

“a group of comrades came over and embraced me. They were comrades whom I had known for some time and were entirely trustworthy. After the first emotional greetings were exchanged, I asked them to explain why they were there and they responded: All we know is that we are here, some as ‘suspects’, and others as ‘dangerous’; and, it would seem, condemned to death. With great sorrow they told me about how they were treated by the comrades of the CNT — treatment that I would soon be able to verify firsthand. No one could explain how, after so many years of the struggle for freedom, after so many shared sacrifices before and during the war, we were being guarded by jailors who, telling us that they were members of the CNT, pistol-whipped us or put us up against the wall. We had surrendered our victory to our enemies and these people were exacting their vengeance on us in the most cowardly fashion!”

The fascist prisoners were treated quite differently, and their cells were much cleaner. “*After all, they were fascists and we were dangerous anarchists!*” (*Un Relato Patético*)

One of these “dangerous anarchists” was José Alba, called “el Nano” [the kid] by the other prisoners, a comrade who had been a member of the war committee of the Fourth Group in Gelsa, along with Progreso and Pablo Ruiz. A member of the Metal Workers Trade Union, was a member of The Friends of Durruti right from the start. Later, perceiving the collaborationist stance of the CNT’s leadership and its toleration by the membership, he left the Organization. The increasingly repressive nature of the republican government, a government supported by certain responsible committees that looked the other way while the libertarians were being persecuted and assassinated, caused him to lose all hope for any possible reaction on the part of the proletariat,

which then led him to think only about himself, breaking all the rules like a good enemy of authority. The hold-up at the Born market provided him with a substantial amount of loot, around half a million pesetas, but they caught him. He entered the Modelo prison on October 12 and, having been condemned to death, he was transferred to the citadel<sup>25</sup>. The three other comrades that Joaquín mentions were a certain Camillo or Canillas, Guerra and Manuel, victims of a police conspiracy. They lived in the ramshackle district of Can Tunis, a working class neighborhood with a long libertarian tradition, segregated and hardly accessible to the police, where the intense class-based sociability still permitted a degree of freedom of movement unthinkable anywhere else. In its bars, implacable militants, counterfeiterers and thieves got along peaceably, all of them outlaws and consequently public enemies in the eyes of the authorities. The borders that separated them from each other, during times of skepticism and desperation, were more than just blurred. These three comrades, Manuel Asensio, Francisco Pérez “Guerra” and José Alcaraz “Canillas”, had been implicated in involvement in a hold-up by an informer in August. The police fabricated some evidence and arrested the witnesses for the defense, while the judge overlooked the contradictions and inconsistencies in the testimonies of the police agents and their informer. They were sentenced to death in November and the Minister of Justice received the “notification” from the president of the Generalitat, Companys. In their final statements before they were executed, one of them, Alcaraz, *“repeatedly proclaimed his innocence, and that the whole frame-up was bullshit, that it was a deliberately planned act of vengeance to punish them for having belonged to the Control Patrols”*<sup>26</sup>. In the same cell block there was a fifth man sentenced to death for another crime, Ricardo Martínez, whom Joaquín forgot to mention. They enjoyed their last few days together. The day they were taken to be executed, a fateful December 23rd, Joaquín requested permission to leave:

“In the custody of a group of hitmen, we embraced to say goodbye forever, shouting with all our might, Viva la anarquía! Their last words were: Only a few hours of life are left to us; we request that you tell our comrades and the whole Organization that we died thinking of our beloved ideals as we shouted ‘viva la anarquía’.” (*Un Relato Patético*)

Alcaraz wrote a final letter to his parents:

---

<sup>25</sup> Pelai Pagès, *La presó Model de Barcelona. Història d'un centre penitenciari en temps de guerra (1936-1939)* [The Modelo Prison of Barcelona. The History of a Penitentiary in Times of War], Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Pere López Sánchez, *Rastros de rostros en un prado rojo (y negro)* [Traces of Faces in a Red (and Black) Meadow], Virus editorial, Barcelona, June 2013.

“telling them that they should not be ashamed of their son; he wrote a letter to his comrades at the Sangrà factory asking them to never allow anyone, for any reason, to ever speak ill of him, that, having come into the world, he will leave it, having given everything to the revolutionary cause.”<sup>27</sup>

The following disgraceful and cruel little note appeared on the following day in *La Vanguardia*:

“Yesterday, within the compound of the Citadel of Montjuich, five robbers were executed by firing squad after having been sentenced to death by the Tribunals.”<sup>28</sup>

During the final offensive staged by Franco’s troops, the prisoners of Montjuich remained behind bars, without any knowledge of what has happening outside the prison, with the “nationalist” soldiers at the very foot of the mountain.

“The guards in the citadel — communists, republicans and even some so-called ‘anarchists’ — had fled the day before, leaving a large number of prisoners locked up in the cells of the ‘tube’, at the mercy of the victorious Franquistas, so they could shoot them at their leisure. They were unable to communicate with each other but they broke down the doors and bars as they made their way to the main courtyard and the gates of the citadel. Together with many other prisoners, I managed to escape in the confusion. Everywhere, we heard gunfire and cries of pain amidst the evacuation of Barcelona. Lost in an avalanche of humanity I was able to reach the outskirts of Barcelona.” (*Un Relato Patético*)

On foot, along with a few others who, like him, were going cross country, walking by day and night out of sight of the highways, careful not to allow themselves to be surprised by any fascists or even by a member of the SIM, Joaquín reached Figueras within seven days. He ate the few coarse vegetables he found on his journey, herbs and sprouts and things like that. The city had been shelled and the railroad was still out of service. The people in their thousands were on the move. After one more day of walking towards Port Bou he reached the French border, with his shoes in tatters, accompanied by soldiers who were still carrying their rifles, and he was then led by gendarmes directly to the refugee camp of Argelès-sur-Mer. The camp consisted of narrow strip of sandy beach surrounded by barbed wire, guarded by Senegalese soldiers. There, thousands of people of all ages and conditions were packed like sardines, fed with lentil soup and a little rice and chick peas. Because there was not enough fresh water for everyone, the refugees improvised a water filtration system so they could drink the seawater. Many people died every day. Joaquín, without even a rag to cover himself, had to sleep for a week out in the open. He made

---

<sup>27</sup> Pere López, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *La Vanguardia*, December 24, 1938.

contact with other comrades of the CNT who were trying to organize in the camp, but we do not know if he participated in the attempt to create a “Franco-Spanish” group of The Friends of Durruti within the camps. They were informed that Casas and José Pérez, who had preferred to remain in Barcelona, had been shot <sup>29</sup>. After spending ten months in that miserable warehouse of the vanquished, he was brought to the Barcarès camp but he had to remain there for only a short time, because he volunteered to work in a labor squad that was going to build a dike at the port of Brest, on the Atlantic coast.

Joaquín was put to work in a quarry as a drill operator, but within a few days, after passing a medical examination, he was sent to work at the bottom of the sea, in a caisson filled with compressed air, laying tons of cement. He had been in Brest for two months when war was declared and the Germans invaded France. Towards the end of May of 1940, a flood of French and English soldiers were heading towards the port of Brest, which was full of ships sent to evacuate them. If the Germans were to reach Brest, the situation would have been very ugly for the refugees. The managers of the works promised that nothing would happen to them, but it was quite certain that their fate would be otherwise. With the Germans on the verge of entering Brest, Joaquín and a group of twenty Spaniards quit work and went to the docks. They approached a warship without knowing either its nationality or its destination and jumped onto its deck. The gap they had to leap across was about five meters, and very good form was required for this feat. Almost all of them made it, and then they concealed themselves under some tarpaulins. The ship set sail, and when it reached the open ocean, the stowaways were discovered and given something to eat. The ship docked at Southampton a few days later at high tide. They were allowed to disembark; then, they boarded a bus that took them to the Crystal Palace. Their treatment at the hands of the British was magnificent, and within a few days Joaquín was given a place to live in a house with an English family. The government gave him an identification card and granted him a small stipend so he could meet his basic needs, but it did not allow him to seek employment until several months had passed. One day in September, he was caught out in the street by the famous German Blitz. From then on, and over a period of nine months, London was bombed daily by the German air force. As a result, the refugees obtained jobs removing debris from bombed houses. It was Joaquín’s first job in England; later, in Regent’s Park, he worked on a crane excavating a

---

<sup>29</sup> For evidence indicating that several people named Casas and José Pérez were executed at the Fossar de la Pedrera, see: José Corbalán Gil, *Justicia, no venganza. Los ejecutados por el franquismo en Barcelona (1939-1952)* [Justice, Not Vengeance. Executions under Franco’s Regime in Barcelona], editorial Silente, Guadalajara, 2008.

tunnel for the subway. Finally, he got a job in a hotel; for several years he worked at the restaurant in the Berkeley Hotel in Mayfair. After so many hard ordeals he finally obtained a stable position, perhaps for the first time in his life. He was more fortunate than most of those who fled from Spain and from Franco. When the Second World War came to a close, he felt no temptation to leave the British Isles.

In December 1941, there was a group of eighty *cenetistas* in the United Kingdom, and among them were some outstanding militants like the former Minister, Juan López, the former member of the National Committee, Delso de Miguel, Mariano Valle (another former member of the NC), Pablo Polgare (from the Peninsular Committee of the FAI), Suceso Portales (of the *Mujeres Libre*), and the *madrileños* Cabañas, Villanueva, Gerardo López, Salgado, Falomir, Acracio Ruiz and García Pradas, most of them with a collaborationist past. There were also people who were close to Joaquín such as Marcelino Benedicto and Francisco Alba (José Alba's brother). The Hungarian Polgare, whose real name was Pal Partos, had a background in the communist left and was very close to Karl Korsch. Joaquín got to know him while serving on the Aragon Front and struck up a close friendship with him that lasted until his suicide in 1964. The exiles in England, as was the case with the other exiles, tended to be divided between those who advocated working with the other republican forces, and those who supported a return to the apolitical and anti-state principles and tactics of classic anarchosyndicalism. There was, however, unanimous agreement in favor of avoiding relations with the Negrinists and communists, since many of the exiles had been members or supporters of the Casado Junta. That is why the first joint declaration of the Spanish Diaspora in England, which was, furthermore, signed by Joaquín and Marcelino, condemned García Oliver's proposal to open up lines of communication with those elements<sup>30</sup>. The former anarchist García Oliver had already aroused suspicion earlier by proposing the founding of a political party. The polemic revolved around the participation of the CNT in the republican governments in exile. Because of the victory of the *Montsenistas*, who favored a return to ideological purism, at the 1945 Paris Congress, the libertarian diaspora was irremediably divided. Joaquín was certainly opposed to any libertarian presence in governments, and he was much less in favor of fighting for the Bourbon monarchy or the "democratic republic". In one of his first articles, entitled "Crítica de actualidad" [Critique of the Present Situation], dated August 1947, he engaged in a polemic with J. J. Doménach, one of the worst bureaucrats in

---

<sup>30</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, Mexico, October 18, 1942.



the Catalan Regional Committee and a bitter enemy of The Friends of Durruti. In another article from March 1948 bearing the title, “Pido una previa” [I Demand Preliminary Clarification], he demands that *“every militant must clearly and cogently define his position and be a faithful reflection of the cause that we are working for”*, and denounces the ambitious scramble for positions within the movement, the “Cabinet Cuckoos” and the “political swindlers”, the deluded collaborationists of the past who are demanding executive positions:

“The anarchist militant is a synthesis of reason and conviction, and on this road, we are adults who know how to guide our steps along the path of what is good, of progress and humanity, and not along the devious ways along which they, the poor devils, want to lead us.”

In any event, once the community of exiles was convinced that the great powers that had defeated Hitler did not have the least intention of overthrowing Franco, the activism and the hopes of one after another faction melted away like a sugar cube in hot water. The European economic situation was very favorable, so that everyone was able to settle down and enjoy their private lives with well-paid jobs. In 1953, Joaquín met Carmen, Marcelino’s sister-in-law, who had just arrived in London, and he married her. They had one daughter. In 1960, the Confederal Nucleus of Great Britain sent delegates to the Reunification Congress in Limoges, but the unity achieved by this meeting, which was only skin deep, did not last very long. When Joaquín succeeded Acracio Ruiz as secretary of the Commission for British Relations, the nucleus had only about a hundred aging and weary, albeit committed, militants. Joaquín and Marcelino managed the George and Dragon Public House, in the South Kensington neighborhood, until their retirement.

Historically, the Spanish libertarian movement was worn out, incapable of overcoming the contradictions that tore it apart during the civil war and the Franco regime. When the Franco regime was ready to hand over the reins of power, and the opposition was jockeying for positions in the new government, the anarchist exile community was incapable of formulating its own alternative beyond the repetition of the old schemas and ideological commonplaces. Basically, Joaquín assumed responsibility for the correspondence of the exiles, for propaganda mailings and for aid for libertarian prisoners who were barely surviving in Franco’s jails. He sent hundreds of pounds to help the prisoners. Among his papers, a few boxes of documents that never made it to Amsterdam in 1939 along with the rest of the confederal archives were found. It was most likely Polgare who brought them, since he participated in the efforts to transfer the archives of the CNT and the FAI to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. These documents include confidential CNT reports on

fraudulent arms purchases, the chekas of the SIM and the Soviet spies, on communist proselytism in the army, on the assassinations of militants at the fronts, on particular incidents like Turón or the 153rd Mixed Brigade, etc. Scandalized by what he discovered while reading these documents, Joaquín did everything he could to publicize these reports, sending copies to all the offices of the exile groups and even to Spain, but with meager results. This information was a public secret, denounced long ago and unfortunately forgotten; on the eve of the death of the dictator, the CNT was legalized and the communist party dominated the ranks of the opposition, which is why few CNT members were prepared to muck around in the past and risk being called provocateurs. Franco's death also marked the end of forced exile, although Joaquín did not return to Spain. For those who once excelled as men of action, the era did not allow them to play a leading role anymore. One by one, the news of the death of his old comrades in arms arrived: Progreso, Balius, Pablo Ruiz, Marcelino... But the idea, like a flower withered by a long, hot summer, still preserves its scent. It occurred to Joaquín that the time had come to tell his story.

Joaquín Pérez Navarro died on August 21, 2006 in London. His companion Carmen had died two years earlier. In accordance with his express desire, his library was donated to the Kate Sharpley Library, and his corpse was draped in the red and black flag. His body was cremated on August 30. The daily newspaper *The Guardian* published a brief obituary <sup>31</sup>.[39](#)

Miguel Amorós, March 19, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](#)

Original text:

**“La mirada hacía atrás: Trayectoria revolucionaria de Joaquín Pérez”**

---

<sup>31</sup> Nick Heath, *The Guardian*, September 18, 2006 [[link](#)].

## An Interview with Miguel Amorós

*Cazarabet-El Sueño Igualitario*

**Cazarabet:** *Miguel, you have written a lot about Durruti: the revolutionary, the voice of the revolution, the bellwether of the struggle ... what is the contribution of your “reevaluation” of this “personality” of anarchism, libertarian ideas and the libertarian movement in Spain?*

**Miguel Amorós:** My purpose in writing *Durruti en el Laberinto* was to demystify him as a person and situate him in his historical context. To break down an ideological myth that was the “organic” creation of a particular bureaucratic apparatus, to restore his anarchist and revolutionary identity, visible in every aspect of his everyday practice. In order to do this, I recapitulated almost every day of the last five months of his life.

**Cazarabet:** *I had some older relatives that were on the losing side of the war and more than one of them said to me at one time or another: “Ay! How would the war have turned out if they had not killed Durruti?” What do you say to that?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The outcome of the war did not depend on any one individual, no matter how charismatic that person may have been. It is nonetheless legitimate to speculate that the rolling back of the revolution might not have taken place at such a rapid pace, that the strategy of the CNT might not have been so counterrevolutionary and that the Stalinization of the Republic might not have penetrated so deeply. So, if Durruti had not been killed, a factor that played a role in the defeat, the enormous demoralization experienced by the masses after his death and especially starting in 1937, might not have had such a major impact.

**Cazarabet:** *And what might have happened with the revolutionary process ... if Durruti had not died ... what might have been different?*

**Miguel Amorós:** There is no doubt that they would have tried to bribe Durruti with a military command of a division or something like that. As they did with Mera. In any event, the first step of the counterrevolution, the militarization of the militias, once it took place, would have taken place under other conditions. The CNT might not have caved in to “circumstances” with such abandon. Furthermore, the attacks of Líster’s division against the Aragon collectives would have been inconceivable with Durruti in Catalonia or Aragon.

**Cazarabet:** *People back in November '36 began to ask who killed Durruti and some questions are still unanswered ... after all these years: do we know anything for certain?*

**Miguel Amorós:** There was a conspiracy of the Soviets to remove Durruti from the Aragon Front and “neutralize” the anarchist influence there. This has been proven by the documentary record. As for his death, it is known for certain that the official version of the stray bullet was as false as the versions of an inside job and an accidental discharge of a “naranjero” [the MP-28 submachine gun used by the Republican forces in the civil war]. Durruti was killed by a shot at close range, from behind, presumably from a group of militiamen who were fleeing from the front lines. Whether this encounter was a result of chance or a set-up is something that we can speculate about, but not prove.

**Cazarabet:** *Durruti was for everyone, for all factions, more of an enemy as a revolutionary element and as the advocate of a social uprising than he was an enemy for the military rebels?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The counterrevolution, which was spearheaded in Spain by the communists, considered Durruti to be an obstacle to the creation of a regular army with barracks discipline, gold braid and epaulets and a general staff outside of the control of the workers organizations; in addition, it feared his projects for “libertarian reconstruction” in the rearguard and at the front, which it stigmatized as absurd utopian experiments.

**Cazarabet:** *The important thing was to confront the abuse of power that victimized those who always had less, the worker, the farmhand, the peasant, the wage laborer ... and create an egalitarian society ... what was important was the revolution and with the military revolt an opportunity arose ... isn't that what happened?*

**Miguel Amorós:** That is not how the leading officials of the confederal organization saw it, which from the very start advocated collaboration in mixed institutions with other political forces and insistently appealed to the rank and file militants to go back to work and not to go too far.

**Cazarabet:** *I understand, based on the little that I have been able to gather from my reading and my conversations, that if people like Ascaso, Durruti, and so forth had not been killed ... the spring of '37 in Barcelona (its impact was more widespread) would not have taken place as it did ... maybe it would not even have had the same outcome.*

**Miguel Amorós:** I make it a point to insist that individuals, as important as they may be, are only individuals. The events of '37 would have taken place in one

way or another. Even while Durruti was alive a similar event occurred in Valencia in connection with the funeral of a militiaman from the Iron Column. On the other hand, people whose prestige was unquestionable, such as Federica Montseny and Juan García Oliver, forfeited all their credibility with their “Cease Fire” appeals. It can of course be assumed that with Ascaso and Durruti among the workers on the barricades the defeat of the revolution would not have been so complete. The abandonment of the barricades might not have implied, for example, the dissolution of the Defense Committees and the Control Patrols, the mass imprisonment of libertarians and the suppression of the Council of Aragon.



**BUENAVENTURA DURRUTI**

By Clifford Harper

**Cazarabet:** *It is often said — and always to condemn anarchist and libertarian ideas — that they were the ones who proposed the alternative: revolution or win the war ... but I saw this more from another perspective: why don't we ask ourselves whether this was not the idea of others, those who were afraid of anarchist ideas and the development of the revolution, and that these people*

*fought two wars at once, one of which was aimed at the revolution and the other (as in a monologue), the war [against Franco's forces] ... what do you think?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The intervention of the masses against the military rebels expelled the State and the employers from many domains wherever the revolution made rapid progress: farmlands, factories, public order, militias, healthcare, education.... However, the state structures remained intact and thanks to the collaboration of the libertarian organizations these structures were rebuilt within a few months. The forces that sought a return to the pre-July 19 status quo employed the slogan of “first the war and then the revolution”. This meant the recovery of control by a State reinforced with its own army and police, and the liquidation of the revolutionary conquests, first by way of nationalization. The first phase of the process took place under the Largo Caballero government; the second phase, during the Negrin period.

**Cazarabet:** *Did Durruti's militiamen frighten them so much that they had to be sent to Madrid? (I ask this question with respect to both the rebel military as well as the communists....) (Because they could have allowed them to do more to “take” Zaragoza, but all of a sudden they are sent to be entangled in the labyrinth of the Madrid Front and the Ciudad Universitaria; sorry, but this whole question just seems to me to have too many loose ends.) What can you tell us about this?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Durruti's arrival in Madrid was quite low-key and did not have a big impact in the press, not even the libertarian press. There was no triumphal procession; that was an *a posteriori* propaganda invention, and was part of the media disputes between the communist and confederal hierarchies. Durruti was stalled about 35 kilometers from Zaragoza due to a shortage of ammunition and weapons, and a lack of artillery and air support. And I will also point out that it was also because of a shortage of combatants (his column did not have more than six thousand men, a few more than fifty “centuries”). The government did not want to compensate for these shortages because it did not want to arm the FAI. Soviet diplomacy had sabotaged all arms purchases because the Soviets did not want to see the anarchist militias well armed, either. Durruti went to Madrid because the leaders of the CNT convinced him that a successful effort there would result in his getting the weapons that he needed in Aragon. But he arrived in Madrid with only one thousand two hundred men (plus another three hundred recruited by *Estat Català*); none of the other available Catalanian militiamen who had been assigned to serve with him wanted to fight under his orders. The result was that with meager forces, exhausted from their journey and not accustomed to fighting under air assault and artillery bombardment, he had to try to seal a dangerous breach in a front

with courage alone against twenty five thousand militiamen and soldiers. It was not a mission that provided an opportunity for great accomplishments and praise, but a suicide mission. Those who pulled the strings to send him there knew what they were doing.

**Cazarabet:** *What was the profound impact of Stalinism and its men in Spain during the Civil War?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Starting in September 1936 Stalinism was hard at work in the Spanish Republic. The weapons that it contributed allowed it to take control of military operations and the secret services, obtain advantages for the Communist Party, persecute dissidents and put an end to anarchosindicalist dominance. The Spanish revolution was sacrificed and the revolutionaries persecuted and assassinated because the Soviet foreign policy of alliances with the bourgeois democracies required the existence in Spain of an authoritarian bourgeois Republic. Stalinism left in its wake a trail of authoritarianism, perfidy, double-dealing, falsehood, manipulation and crime, in short, totalitarianism. The communist parties inherited its methods and applied them to the degree that they were capable of doing so.

**Cazarabet:** *Was there treachery, direct or indirect, in the assassination of Durruti? Was the government behind it, and the hand of Stalin and his agents in Spain?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It can be said unequivocally that Stalin's agents conspired to remove Durruti from the Aragon Front. The Prime Minister consciously or unwittingly played his role in this. And so did some of the other Ministers in his cabinet. The National Committee of the CNT and the Peninsular Committee of the FAI did their part, too, for what must be assumed were their own political reasons.

**Cazarabet:** *The disagreements in the CNT, when some took a position in favor of joining the government, a position that we can characterize as indicative of the "bureaucratization" of the CNT, and others were very much opposed to this course of action ... the outbursts of dissent were quite violent, there were incidents involving what we could consider to be "fighting words" ... maybe this had something to do with his death ... we can only recall what you wrote in your book: that Mariano Rodríguez Vázquez ("Marianet"), at that time the General Secretary of the CNT, "met with all the witnesses and pressured them to remain silent" and you conclude that "Durruti was killed by his comrades; they killed him by corrupting his ideas".*

**Miguel Amorós:** Durruti did not come out publicly against the entry of the CNT in the republican government, just as he did not publicly oppose the CNT's joining the Catalanian government. He did, however, express his anger at the sinister machinations in the rearguard (see his famous radio speech of November 5). His death was in a way favorable for the development of the anarchist bureaucracy. First of all, it allowed the leaders of the CNT to unambiguously advocate the militarization of the libertarian columns; and later, they put into his mouth words that called upon the workers to renounce the revolution and libertarian principles in order to support the war. The CNT-FAI was bureaucratized as it became integrated into the State institutions, as the odds of winning the war diminished, and as the Spanish proletariat was isolated internationally, as the libertarian organizations felt they had to make an abrupt change of course and make deals with the communists. The class war was buried to the benefit of a war for independence. The militiamen ceased to fight for their class interests in order to fight instead for the defense of "the nation". Their enemies were no longer the bourgeoisie, the clergy and the military, but rather "foreign invaders". The mystifying rhetorical excesses of the libertarian leaders transformed Durruti, the proletarian hero, into a national warlord [caudillo nacional], a figure of racial mythology and a xenophobic militarist. That was when they killed him a second time.

Miguel Amorós, interviewed by Sussanna Anglès Querol  
on behalf of Cazarabet-El Sueño Igualitario, March 26, 2015.

"[Cazarabet](#)" is the name of a bookstore in Mas de las Matas, Spain; "el sueño igualitario" means "the egalitarian dream", and is the name of one of the bookstore's departments that specializes in anarchism and the history of the Spanish civil war [Translator's note].

Miguel Amorós, *Durruti en el laberinto* [Durruti in the Labyrinth],  
Mutturereko burutazioak, Bilbao, 2006.  
New, expanded edition published by Virus Editorial, Barcelona, 2014

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**"Cazarabet conversa con Miquel Amorós"**



April 2015

# Vanishing Points in Working Class Culture

*Reflections on the cultural genocide of the proletariat*

In order to understand the impact of The Friends of Durruti in the Spanish revolutionary war we must situate it in the context of rampant counterrevolution that confronted many veteran anarchosyndicalist militants of proven merit with a radical dilemma. Either obey the leading committees of their organization, which ordered them not to respond to counterrevolutionary aggression, or openly engage the counterrevolutionary forces in battle. Based on the revolutionary resolve and the human qualities of those proletarian fighters, one can easily explain the last working class revolution, which lasted from July 19, 1936 to May 8, 1937. We have restricted the scope of our efforts to nine biographies, to which others could easily be added — those of Jaime Balius and Joaquín Pérez Navarro, which I have already published — without running out of material. The CNT and anarchism were an unparalleled source of individuals who were totally devoted to the cause of freedom and social justice — the cause of the proletariat — and who were referred to by their enemies as “incontrolados”. This insult was an involuntary homage that was rendered by the counterrevolution to those revolutionaries who were not subject to the institutional control of the bourgeoisie and the Stalinists. If history took a wrong turn, it was not their fault. All the anti-historical forces conspired to bring it about, from the fascist conglomerate to the republican cement. The bourgeoisie played all its trump cards to do everything it could to win. The publication of this modest book proves that its victory was not total.

In other times, we believed that the revelation of the truth concealed in defeats would be enough to orient revolutionary action, diverting its agents from historical dead ends. We assumed that the past contained all the necessary lessons to resolve the dilemmas of the present. Now, however, the publication of a book in a society that lives in a perpetual present is necessarily an anachronism, an untimely event. Knowledge of the truth of the past has no effect on everyday activities. It does not reinforce the values of a potentially revolutionary community, nor does it augment the critical capacities of engaged readers. In a society without any consciousness of time and without memory, the past does not exist, and only arises as the object of archeological research or

as spectacular ephemera like the “eightieth anniversary of the civil war”, its usual place being the university, the museum, or the cultural supplements of the mainstream press, contexts in which its subversive, and preservative, power, is neutralized. These biographies are intended for the heirs of the legendary Friends of Durruti — but do such heirs even exist?

Traditional societies transmitted their legacies orally from one generation to the next. Young people learned from their elders; there was no generation gap. These were static societies: the future of the young people flowed in the channels of the past and proceeded along the path that was also followed by the previous generation. Family and territorial bonds were very strong. Memory, of which the elders were the custodians, played an important role in the preservation of social customs and identity, and it was therefore of fundamental importance in the continuous reproduction of society. The rise of historical societies, based on constant change, the accumulation of knowledge, trade and the written word, introduced dissolving factors that were at first restricted to cities. These societies are dynamic societies with weakened bonds and unstable identities, in which memory plays a secondary role compared to novelty. The majority of the population, however, remained outside this nihilist dynamic, since it lived in the countryside and preserved traditional lifestyles that were not eliminated until the consolidation of capitalism in the rural areas. In fully capitalist society, young people learn on their own by adopting the universal consumerist patterns transmitted by the mass communications media, rather than learning from their elders; their future depends on a present that is separated from the experience of the previous generations that were much less affected by technology because they came of age, for the most part, outside of capitalist conditioning. Turbo-capitalist production has imposed an industrialized way of life, a new narcissistic culture with certain pragmatic and hedonistic values without any relation at all to the values that prevailed in the working class milieus prior to their conversion by the gospel of generalized consumption.


During the early stages of capitalism, by dissolving traditional ways of life, capitalism created a world apart with its own characteristics, a society within a society composed of the disinherited, the pariahs, the uprooted populations expelled from the countryside or their craft guilds; in short, the workers. The proletarian world, based on the family, whose sole connection with the industrial society that surrounded it was labor, developed communitarian features that gave it a particular, stable identity, a class identity, a specific culture. In a way, there was a working class tradition that articulated the society of labor and possessed its own permanent values: the need for association, the federative idea, the thirst for education, solidarity, the dignity of one’s trade, the


future of one's children, class pride, internationalism, the social revolution.... The autobiographies written by the militants of that time are perfect reflections of this mentality. We are thinking, for example, of the memoirs and autobiographical writings of Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Gustave Lefrançaise, James Guillaume, Anselmo Lorenzo, Nestor Makhno, Emma Goldman, Victor Serge, Manuel Pérez, José Peirats, etc., precious accounts of rebel lives devoted to the service of the workers' cause.

Presentació de l'últim llibre d'Aldarull  
**LOS INCONTROLADOS DE 1937**  
Memorias militantes  
del los Amigos de Durruti

Amb l'autor  
Miquel Amorós

Divendres 29 de maig  
19h **Ateneu La Pua**  
l'Hospitalet  
Carrer Unió 33  
metro Santa Eulàlia

 Aldarull  
Edicions



Proletarian society was in a state of permanent conflict with bourgeois society, which is why the experience of the struggles of the past was so important, and why those who led these struggles played such a major role in that society. It was a society based on status. The future of the class was based on the memory of the battles of the past and also on the memory of those who played outstanding roles in those battles, who were popular and enjoyed a great deal of moral authority. For it was through written works that working class

culture was constituted, a typically historical culture of resistance, that is, a culture that found its meaning and its existence in history, since its final victory was inscribed in its innermost being, but was also at the same time a traditional culture, firmly based on certain deeply-rooted collective values, resistant to the effects of the passage of time. The children of the workers imitated their parents even with respect to clothing styles, succeeding them in a stable social scenario. Paradoxically, their meaning and their existence also depended on the invariable customs rooted in the class. The history of the workers, which is the history of their struggles, although a history of a collective, is also a history of individuals. These individuals were people who embodied the conduct and the values that were most representative of the class, which is why individual contributions were not relevant and were forgotten with the passage of time. A few examples in the context of the Spanish situation: Salvador Seguí, Francisco Maroto and Buenaventura Durruti, the last legendary figures of the proletariat (legendary in a sense quite different from the Sorelian concept of “myth”). These individuals embodied the reaffirmation of working class identity and an attempt to protect the latter from the corrosive effect of a historical process determined by capitalism.

The current of the proletarian and peasant movement of Spain that was influenced by anarchism stressed the customary or traditional aspect, since it was fighting not against a highly-developed capitalism, but against the very existence of capitalism itself, which was still in a very under-developed state in Spain at that time. Faith in progress had only a very superficial effect on it, in the form of scientific optimism, a bourgeois influence that it was incapable of repudiating. Franz Borkenau, in *The Spanish Cockpit*, written during the Spanish civil war, pointed out that, “the rebellion of the Spanish masses was not a fight for better conditions inside a progressive capitalist system which they would admire; it was a fight against the first advances of capitalism itself, which they hated... And this, in my opinion, is the explanation of the preponderance of anarchism in Spain”. The ideas of private profit, quantity, success, mechanization, utilitarianism, etc., which were characteristic of an industrial civilization, had scarcely established a small foothold in a social environment that was self-governed by principles like solidarity, fraternity, friendship and a desire for education.

In the most advanced stages of capitalism — in which one defeat after another followed hard on the heels of incessant and profound changes, technological for the most part, that exploded working class society, integrating it into the world of the commodity — the proletarian present broke with its past, it split from it, it ceased to identify with it. With the working class family

reduced to its minimal nuclear expression, sitting in front of the television, the worker subsists as an individual consumer, rather than as a member of the proletarian collective. He does not derive his norms from the past, which has been usurped by trade union and political bureaucrats, but from the present, transmitted by television, reproducing the erratic and consumerist pattern of conduct of his contemporary models in the middle class, loyal to the directives of the spectacle. Working class culture has been dissolved into an inter-classist, homogenized culture created in the image of capitalism. A veritable cultural genocide has taken place, an eradication of proletarian values. The generation gap has special consequences in a working class in decline, since the latter ends up disarticulated, an empty shell of its former self. It is incapable of resisting even the slightest blow, much less of assimilating all the changes without harm to itself. It is a class on the surface, but inside it is de-structured, liquefied, colonized. Eventually, the older proletarians were no longer capable of transmitting knowledge and values with which the new, constantly changing situation could be confronted, and this circumstance was only aggravated if they allowed themselves to be swayed by the "lesser of two evils" tactic and allowed false friends to represent their interests. Their old-fashioned, frugal, pedestrian, austere and moralistic lifestyle is not valid in a utilitarian, anxious, constantly busy, completely motorized, commodified world of mass consumption. The rules appropriate for poverty are not the same rules that apply to an abundance of commodities and spectacles: that which is effective against hunger is of no use against boredom. A class culture is at a great disadvantage in its competition not with a bourgeois culture, but with a culture industry and omnipresent trade union and political stage-managed theater. Thus, working class culture dies with the institutionalization of its organizations and the generalization of mass culture.

The past is extinguished with the disappearance of an entire generation of defeated individuals, because older workers cannot offer practical models of conduct; they have to construct them based on a different, extremely mercurial reality, without any moorings. The conditions of the young wage workers of our time are radically different from those of previous generations. The children of the workers are educated by public institutions, not by their parents, and these institutions transmit a different set of rules disconnected from past experience and in consonance with the reproductive needs of capital determined by the new technologies. The disconnection from the past impels a search for reference points of conduct in a present that is colonized by the commodity, a search that must take place in conditions of extreme isolation. A retired worker is like an alien from another planet to a young member of the labor force, and neither takes the other

seriously, and sometimes they view each other with mutual distrust. The older worker does not tell the whole truth, which, in the real absence of community, only exacerbates the generation gap, the loss of memory and, consequently, the loss of identity. Without either memory or past, class consciousness cannot survive. The conflict between generations, the clash of mentalities, prevents its resurgence. The abstract and voluntaristic reaffirmation of the old concepts of working class culture, now transformed into so many clichés, not only fails to resolve the problem, but renders those concepts ridiculous.

A typical characteristic of contemporary social movements is the scarcity of adults and, conversely, the predominance of adolescents. This is the most glaring example of the disconnection with previous social struggles, even with relatively recent ones, but it also exemplifies the overwhelming degree of submission and scepticism of people who have had some experience of life. These social movements are tolerated ghettos that usually remain within the boundaries assigned to them. The same is true of those movements that suddenly arise from out of nowhere and succumb to the usual crude maneuvers, since by their very nature they lack the historical experience and knowledge to recognize how they are being manipulated. They are beaten in advance, and moreover their potential for protest is often channeled directly towards new efforts to reinforce the dominant system, for when they abandon their usual niches and enter the public arena they only do so in order to adopt the point of view of the bovine majority and to almost automatically reproduce its values, thereby modernizing its outward appearances. Regressive social changes have their cultural reflections, and the lessons learned by the dissident youth are the products of the moment and are only relevant on a day-to-day basis. Most of these young people neither read nor do they seek to inform themselves. They neither learn anything, nor do they attempt to rid themselves of the effects of their mainstream education: they act without thinking. In the late stage of capitalism, mass culture has become so unstable that not even the present is capable of offering tolerably lasting models for conduct. Changes succeed one another so rapidly that even a single generation is internally divided and split in this way. Today's young people grow old in a few years, which is how long it takes them to change their convictions. Their histories soon become uninteresting to those who follow them, and rapidly become obsolete like changing fashions. Ten years are an unbridgeable chasm. Past, present and future are concentrated in a single instant. From this point on, the problem is not that experience cannot be transmitted, but that there is no experience. There is neither a rupture properly speaking (every generation constitutes such a rupture), nor is there a future, there are only short-term objectives. Conduct

therefore becomes conformist and politics becomes institutional; after being shown the door, it returns through the window. In this kind of world the only utopia is the capitalist utopia.

Consumer society has created an increasingly more alien and hostile environment for the older generations; for the younger generations, however, this is their environment and they feel comfortable in it. It seems more like their epoch than that of their parents. It is not that the preceding generations no longer serve as guides, but that, insofar as the past is incommunicable, guides cannot exist. Not only do the different generations abide by different codes and literally speak different languages, but the different strata of a single generation are divided in the same way. The newcomers do not know more than the others, but what the latter know is of no interest to them, because this knowledge does not respond as expected to their scarce questions. Experience is of no use, since it was acquired in very different circumstances, before the absolute reign of the commodity and the complete establishment of its cultural norms. The question then arises: what good is memory? This has its consequences, however: such historical amnesia implies the disappearance of the concept of truth. Disconnected from history, truth becomes relative; it is not based in any solid cause nor is it determined by an iron historical necessity, but depends exclusively on contingent, arbitrary and variable opinion, which is in turn dependent on the immediate conditions of the individual who expresses it. This marks the end of the ideologies that legitimized great collective causes, and the advent of the absolute rule of pragmatic individualism, private life and ephemeral commitments. And, paradoxically, it also implies the reunification of the various generations within neurotic isolation and complacent ignorance. Young people are old without wanting to be old; older people are driven to behave like young people. Curiously, this gives rise to a reversal of perspective: young people serve as models for the adults, who are not as skilled in dealing with change. This situation has no historical precedent; it is entirely new. Some have called it "liquid modernity" and others, "post-modernity". In a postmodern context, thought has no moorings; instead, it accumulates along the side of the road of life that is paved by technology. It is a decorative accompaniment, it explains nothing, it is self-referential and stands above everything, without influencing anything. More than just liquid, reflection is becoming gaseous, like the tremendously fluid reality to which it is yoked. Its function is not rooted in its power to grasp the epoch, in its capacity for truth, but rather in its ability to render both unintelligible.

An eternal present not only depreciates the value of the struggles of the past, but also entails the volatility of social groups, which are easily reducible to

masses of aggregated individuals, whose sole nexus is the image. Much the same is true of community feeling, which is replaced by a hive-mentality composed of desperate identities, truly pathological to various degrees, incapable of mounting any other kind of resistance to the general sensation of uprootedness. However, the system can only overcome its contradictions by plunging into other, more profound contradictions. With the suppression of memory and the derangement of the ego, society is not made stronger, but becomes increasingly more unpredictable. Conflict is constantly reproduced in new forms, thus even making possible the formation of communities of struggle, still fragile, but, at a certain critical moment, it is possible that they will be reinforced by the need to survive, and thus rendered capable of re-encountering history and forging a radically egalitarian and just project for society. This will involve neither a return to the past, nor a recreation of the past, but a reestablishment of contact with the past and learning from it. It is therefore not a nostalgic revolt oriented towards the recreation of lost traditions, but an impulse towards the formation of a new tradition of struggle — a new culture — by way of a non-doctrinaire re-appropriation of the past and resistance to the demented pace of the changes introduced by economic development. It is in this sense that books like the one we are presenting here can be instructive because they can make a contribution to the creation of such a culture. If this happens, then The Friends of Durruti might finally have some heirs.

Miguel Amorós.

Presentation of the book *Los Incontrolados del 37*.

*Memorias militantes de Los Amigos de Durruti*,  
edited by Aldarull, at El Banc Expropiat de Gràcia,  
Barcelona, April 10, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Puntos de fuga en la cultura obrera**  
*Reflexión sobre el genocidio cultural del proletariado”*



# The Civil Society Plague

## *The Middle Class and its Discontents*

That economics and politics go hand in hand is an elementary fact. The logical consequence of this relation is that real politics must be fundamentally economic: the market economy has its corresponding market politics. The forces that direct the world market also exercise *de facto* control over the States, with regard to both foreign and domestic policies, and this same control is also exercised at the local as well as the national level. This is how it is: economic growth is the necessary and sufficient condition for the political stability of capitalism. Within capitalism, the party system evolves in accordance with the pace of development. When development is in high gear, politics tends to take the form of a two-party system. When development falters the political panorama diversifies, as if in compliance with a homeostatic mechanism.

Capital, which is a social relation originally based on the exploitation of labor, has appropriated all human activities and invaded every sphere: culture, science, art, everyday life, leisure, politics... The fact that every nook and cranny of society has been commodified means that all aspects of life itself function in accordance with mercantile standards, or, which amounts to the same thing, it means that they are ruled by the logic of capitalism. In a market-society with such features there are no classes in the classic meaning of the word (separate worlds in confrontation), but rather an undifferentiated and malleable mass in which the class of capital – the bourgeoisie – is no longer clearly demarcated, while its ideology has become generalized and its values have come to regulate all behavior regardless of class differences. This particular form of blurring the boundaries between the classes does not reflect a diminution of social inequality; quite the contrary, social inequality is much more accentuated, but, paradoxically, it is perceived less distinctly, and, as a result, there is less real combativity. The bourgeois way of life has penetrated the non-bourgeois classes, liquidating the desire for radical change. Wage workers do not want any other lifestyle, or any other kind of society, or, at most, they want a better position within the existing society, i.e., more purchasing power. Violent antagonism is relocated to the margins: the greatest contradiction is now rooted in exclusion more than in exploitation. The main actors in the historical and social drama are no longer those who are exploited on the market, but those who have been

expelled, or have chosen to separate themselves, from the market: those who are situated outside of the “system” and who tend to act in ways detrimental to it.

Mass society is a standardized, but tremendously hierarchical, society. Its commanding heights are not staffed by a class of owners or rentiers, but rather by executives who constitute a veritable managerial class. Power therefore derives from one’s function, not from one’s possessions. Decision-making is concentrated in the highest echelon of the social hierarchy; oppression, mainly in the form of precarious employment and exclusion, wreaks its havoc in the lowest part of the social hierarchy. The intermediate layers neither feel the sting of oppression nor do they concern themselves with it, they just acquiesce. During periods of economic crisis, however, the phenomenon of oppression ascends the social scale towards them, dragging them downwards. These strata, usually called the middle classes, then awaken from their apathetic condition, upon which the party system was based, contaminate the social movements and engage in political initiatives which take the form of new alliances and parties. Their goal is obviously not the emancipation of the proletariat, or a free society of free producers; in a word, their goal is not socialism. Their objective is much more prosaic, because the only thing that they seek to achieve is to save the middle class, that is, to save it from being proletarianized.

The geographic and social expansion of capitalism entails the expansion of sectors of wage workers linked to the rationalization of the production process, the development of the tertiary sector in the economy, the professionalization of public life and statist bureaucratization: government officials, consultants, experts, technicians, white collar managerial staff, journalists, members of the liberal professions, etc. Their status is derived from their academic training, not from their ownership of the means of labor. Classic social democracy perceived these new “middle classes” as a stabilizing factor that made possible a moderate reformist politics, and, of course, their further development allowed the process of globalization to be maximized without too many difficulties. The exponential growth in the number of students was the most eloquent sign of their prosperity; unemployment among college graduates, on the other hand, has marked the devaluation of their training and therefore has served as an indicator of their abrupt proletarianization. Their response, of course, does not adopt anti-capitalist characteristics, which are completely foreign to their nature, but is embodied in a moderate revision of the political scene combined with a fervid attachment to the social democratic reformism of the past.

The middle class finds itself at the heart of modern false consciousness and does not contemplate its own specific condition as such; in its view, its condition is

universal. It sees everything through its own particular lens, exacerbated by the crisis. With regard to its mentality, everyone is middle class and must express themselves in the prefabricated language that has been provided to them by their thinkers (Negri, Gramsci, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Baudrillard, Mouffe, etc.). As for its politics, everyone is a citizen, that is, a member of a community of voters, and everyone must enthusiastically participate in elections and in the technical machinery to mobilize voter participation: postmodern ideological cretinism, on the one hand, and technologically-equipped parliamentary cretinism, on the other. Its worldview prevents its supporters from understanding social conflicts as class struggles; for them, such conflicts arise from the incorrect distribution of assets, a problem whose solution lies in the hands of the State, and therefore depends on the political hegemony of the political formations that best represent the middle class. The middle class reconstructs its political identity in opposition, not to capitalism, but to the “caste”, that is, to the political oligarchy that has made the State its own patrimony. The other corrupt sectors, bankers, real estate developers and trade union leaders, are relegated to a secondary level. The middle class is the fearful class; it is set in motion by fear; ambition or vanity appear alongside confidence and tranquility. Its class enthusiasm is completely exhausted in parliamentarism; the electoral conflict is the only battle that it thinks of waging, since there is no place in its plans for a frontal confrontation with the source of its fears, power, and its highest priority is to restore its pre-2008 status.

The concept of “citizenship” offers a substitute identity wherever working class community has been destroyed by capital. Citizenship is the quality of the citizen, a being with the right to vote whose enemies are apparently neither capital nor the State, but the old majority parties, the major obstacles standing in the way of the desperately beleaguered middle class’s march on the institutions of the State. The ideology of civil society, which is the ideology of a middle class that has been mistreated by the global market, is not, however, merely a variation of Stalinoid workerism; it is instead the postmodern version of bourgeois radicalism, and therefore the vanguard of social regression. Not even for the benefit of its public image does it recognize itself in anti-capitalism, which it considers to be obsolete, but instead it embraces a more or less populist kind of social liberalism. This is because the crux of civil society ideology is the decline of the middle classes and their real aspirations, however much it may avail itself of the support of the masses who are at risk of exclusion, but who are too disoriented to act autonomously, and of the social movements which are too weak to impose a reorganization of civil society outside of the economy and the State. In this sense, civil society ideology, which is the successor and heir of the failed neo-Stalinism of the IU, MC, and IC type [IU: *Izquierda Unida*: United Left, founded in 1986. MC: *Movimiento*

*Comunista*: Communist Movement, founded in 1971. IC: *Iniciativa per Catalunya*: Initiative for Catalonia, founded in 1987 — Translator's note], perseveres despite its frustrated desires for leadership and its inferiority complexes, although it preserves certain authoritarian eccentricities of its own and uses one or another symbol for purposes of establishing an identity. The civil society program is a program of parvenus: it is extremely flexible. Principles do not matter; its strategy is consciously opportunist, because, despite the fact that it makes use of almost every unemployed political adventurer, its ranks are generally composed of careerists who are new on the political scene and who propose only short-term objectives.

No civil society program will call for the socialization of the means of life, generalized self-management, the suppression of the political specialization, council administration, communal ownership or the balanced distribution of the population on the territory. The civil society parties and alliances simply call for a redistribution of "wealth" that would expand the mesocratic base, that is, they agitate for certain institutional budgetary allocations that would mitigate the precariousness of labor and absorb into the workforce the majority of unemployed college graduates, intentions which by no means threaten to bring about a break with the past. They do not even enter the political arena as enemies; their talk about changing the 1978 constitution is not sincere. They have not yet set foot in the ring and yet they still display realism and moderation in abundance, building bridges to the reviled "caste" and even making deals with some of its parties. They are aware of the fact that, once they are consolidated as organizations and possess enough influence in the media, the next step will be the management of the existing system in a more clear and effective way than it was previously managed. They do not subscribe to any destabilizing measures because the leaders of the civil society movement must show that the economy will develop more smoothly if they are the ones at the helm of the ship of state. They must perforce present themselves as the hope of salvation for the economy, which is why their project identifies progress with productivity, that is, it is developmentalist. They therefore advocate industrial and technological growth that will create jobs, redistribute income and increase exports, whether this is to be achieved by way of reforms of the tax system, or by the intensive exploitation of territorial resources. The least that can be said of these proposals is that the jobs that they would create will be socially useless and will not respond to real needs. Economic realism is in command and complements their political realism: nothing outside of politics and nothing outside of the market — everything for the market.

The relative upsurge of the civil society movement, including its nationalist variants, is indicative of the relative exacerbation of the economic crisis which, far from deepening the social divide and laying bare the causes of oppression and leading to a conscious and organized protest movement that calls for the destruction of the capitalist regime, has instead resulted in their dissimulation and concealment, allowing for the emergence and development of a false opposition that, far from challenging the system of domination, reinforces and supports it: a crisis that has stopped halfway. Nonetheless, social oppression and alienation are profound, and over the long term they cannot be camouflaged as questions of politics, but will end up arising as social questions. The outburst of the social question will depend on the return of the real social struggle, a struggle which is foreign to the media and politics, a struggle saturated with initiatives born among the most uprooted sectors of the masses, the ones that have little to lose if they decide to cut the bonds that tie them to the cart of the middle class and if they cast aside bourgeois prejudices against nature. Today, however, these potentially anti-system sectors seem to be exhausted and incapable of organizing themselves autonomously, and that is why the civil society movement is running rampant in their ranks, gently knocking on the door of the existing institutions and asking for permission to enter.

Miguel Amorós.

Transcript of a talk scheduled to be given at the Cafetería Ítaca in Murcia on April 30, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“La peste ciudadana**  
*La clase media y sus pánicos”*

## The Invasion of Waste

Nothing might seem less natural, but the fact is that, now that the rule of the economy is total and complete, what grows best in the countryside is not vegetation, but waste treatment facilities. Nowadays, the main purpose of the land is not to provide food to the nearby urban zones, for, with massive industrialization of agriculture and the relocation of agricultural production, the local farm has ceased to be a profitable proposition and, consequently, the small farmer's way of life has become unviable. Instead, in view of the fact that the urban agglomerations are incapable of entirely eliminating all their wastes, the countryside's potential to serve as a place to dump toxic substances has been noted and exploited. The profits became very tempting, which drove a horde of predatory businessmen and corrupt politicians to cash in on the transport, burial and maintenance of all kinds of industrial wastes and toxic by-products, stomping all over the territory like a bull in a china shop. Whereas traditional economies recycled their leftovers, the market economy endlessly accumulates wastes that have to be put somewhere. It does not transform them into raw materials, but converts them into immortal commodities.

In a super-urbanized society, rural space has lost all its autonomy. It is not a world apart, with its own customs, traditions and norms. It is an extension of the urban world, a reserve suitable for all kinds of operations — all, that is, except precisely for small-scale agriculture. Today, the uses of the countryside are dictated from the urban agglomerations of the great cities — which are now often called conurbations — places where investors, consultants, urban planners and politicians jointly draft development plans that respond to interests that are alien to the reality of the small-scale farmer. Danger always comes from the urban jungle. It is the oligarchy of the city that is planning the new function and the territory's new fate, which effectively has nothing to do with agriculture. The countryside is only a periphery, an undeveloped void or a quaint landscape that passively awaits its degrading exploitation. Thus, from the point of view of the globalized economy, it is not infrastructure projects, real estate speculation or the tourism or entertainment industries that are superfluous, all of which are destructive of nature and cropland; it is the cultivators themselves who are superfluous. This is not because agriculture is no longer productive enough: in this respect the territory is the same as it was before. It is just that its population,

its municipalities, its public services, its rural ways of life, and even its vegetation, etc., are burdensome, and expensive to maintain. If the territory is deprived of these elements, its fate is sealed.

The economic needs that rule society not only increase the disequilibrium between the conurbation and the territory, lay waste to the land and artificialize life, but also bring about circumstances where this disequilibrium is the *conditio sine qua non* for meeting those needs. The crisis of the territory is more than just a reflection of the urban world, it is the other face of the urban crisis. In an unprecedented manner, the race for productivity gains and profits have entered into conflict with the territory, after having first ravaged the city. We can thank the separation between real social needs and the voracious hunger for profit for the acceleration of the greenhouse effect, acid rain, forest fires, pollution, the destruction of flora and fauna... The typical aberrations of the urban lifestyle, such as pathological individualism, absurd dietary fads, novel diseases, the uncontrolled mechanization of life, etc., are now common in the rural areas. The flight forward on the part of the statist civilization of the market has entered into conflict with human health, imposing ever more insane consumerist lifestyles on the population. At this time, the capitalist solution for all problems passes through the transformation of the territory into a market, or more precisely, into a market of markets: a market that includes the market of the earth, the natural environment, vacation resorts, second homes, pollution, logistics, the “renewables” industry and ... waste treatment and disposal. The frenetic urban lifestyle constantly absorbs fuel, motor vehicles, plastics, chemical products, cement and industrial food, all of which pose serious problems with respect to the disposal of sewage and other waste. And at the same time a prosperous market opportunity arises, that of the market for waste treatment and disposal.

What they call “private initiative” is nothing but the battle tactic used by the forces of the economy against the society that they parasitize. In consideration of the havoc they have wreaked, we can verify that this trend reflects a veritable war in which the territory is getting the worst of it. If, by chance, the population does not willingly consent to the immediate enrichment of a handful of unscrupulous businessmen, the decision-makers accuse it of being against “development”, the official alibi for the progress of disaster. The fact that they are supported by finance, the communications media and the political parties makes it clear that the enemy of the territory and of its people is composed of not just a handful of savage entrepreneurs; it is a whole system of domination, whose mainstays are Capital and the State.

Faced with the most destructive consequences of the economics and politics of the market, world leaders have proposed, at various summit meetings, a pact between the economy and ecological concerns, expressed in such formulas as “sustainable development” and a “new territorial culture”. In view of the limited resources of the planet and the unlimited requirements of economic growth — the two poles of an irresolvable contradiction — they concluded that business must be “green” or it will not exist, that is, business must deduct the environmental cost of its production process from its profits. The corporations affected by this development had to take this into account in their own plans. This was how the environmental crises of the capitalist regime were isolated, reducing the territorial question to an environmental, a conservationist and, in the final analysis, a political problem, and, at the same time, concealing its economic and social nature. What the defenders of sustainability are really defending is development, which they never question and, as a result, they also defend the political and economic regime that promotes this same kind of development. If they issue appeals to institutions, they do so not in order to abolish the dictatorship of the economy, but to impose some minimal conditions on its operations. Their realism does not aspire to liberate civil society from the yoke of capital, but to make it more bearable: they want to change some aspects of the system in order to save the system as a whole. From their perspective, institutions — which, when all is said and done, are nothing but the political-administrative form of the market — acquire a neutral character that they have never actually possessed. The decision-making power, that is, the general will, which cannot possibly be exercised outside of counter-institutions of self-government such as popular assemblies and neighborhood communities, ends up being usurped by self-appointed representatives of ambiguous platforms, which are neither fish nor fowl, or by politicians of one party or another, whose mission is to drown the defense of the territory in the legal and parliamentary swamp.

If we want a harmonious relation between the urban world and the territory, we have to reconcile the two realities by reestablishing their erstwhile complementary functions. In order to find the equilibrium between the city and the rural world, we need to repopulate the countryside, recover communal goods, restore customary rights and, above all, dismantle the conurbations. The establishment of a communitarian way of life that is protected from the imperatives of industrialization must be born from the ruins of the stockyard-type population centers that are still called cities, although they are not real cities. The reign of freedom comes after a process of ruralization and de-industrialization capable of restoring its lost autonomy to a horizontally



reorganized society. This means the end of the market and the return to the domestic and uncommodified economy of needs and desires. The libertarian utopia will not be built if its construction is not informed by an anti-developmental perspective.

While principles and final goals are necessary to prevent struggles from being recuperated by the dominant system and to prevent its defeats from being transformed into victories for the greenwashed economy, tactics will have to concretize the guidelines of everyday action in a practical manner, confronting particular local conflicts with the means at their disposal, which are often meager. While it is obvious that the defense of territory has an unequivocally anti-capitalist aspect, since it stands in the way, with greater or lesser effectiveness, of the atrocities of economic development, it is also obvious that the forces that are currently involved in this defense do not have a clear understanding of this factor. The question of social conflict will not be clearly perceived except at the end of a series of defensive battles. It is necessary to mobilize the largest possible number of people — many of whom are trapped in conurbations — against harmful or useless projects if any attempt is to be made to cultivate a collective subject with sufficient discernment and power, first, to bring a halt to destructive plans, and then, going on the offensive by way of the desertion of the urban centers, to occupy the rural zones and implement communitarian projects.

Miguel Amorós.

Transcript of a talk scheduled to be given at Otros (Valencia), in opposition to the planned construction of an animal waste treatment facility at Poble del Duc, May 6, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“La invasión de los residuos”**

## The golden mediocrity

You'll live more virtuously, my Murena,  
by not setting out to sea, while you're in dread  
of the storm, or hugging fatal shores  
too closely, either.

Horace, *Odes*, Book 2.

Capitalist society is a society of hierarchically stratified masses. If there is one thing that distinguishes today's masses from classes, it is the fact that masses detest action, and always prefer that others should act in their stead, while they devote themselves to their private affairs. Someone even went so far as to say that masses do not want revolution, but the spectacle of revolution; now, however, even the spectacle of revolution is not to their taste. Onstage, the masses like to show off rather than communicate, but their feeling of insecurity is so great and their fear of losing what they have is so intense, that the director must be very sparing with the play's dramatic development and must emphasize the music instead. Or, to speak plainly: the play must walk on eggshells and give the impression that everything will go swimmingly in a happy world that is shielded from danger, with peace, tranquility and no pay cuts. Outside of the spectacle, struggles can be anything but massive, while the few that violate the rules of the game and sound a violent note will be regularly condemned as provocations harmful to the participative regime, the alleged guarantor of "well being" and "democracy", the two mainstays of the easy-going postmodern condition.

The proletarianization of the world, that is, the renewal of capitalism at all levels after the defeat of the last workers movement — to which we must add its fusion with the State and the media — made possible a considerable degree of economic and administrative growth, creating an environment of bureaucratic-commercial prosperity favorable for the optimal development of an intermediate salaried stratum. The latter was not a real class, a world apart by virtue of its own particular ideology, its own customs and its own values, but an agglomeration of diverse fragments lacking any solid nexus, yet its members were satisfied, politically indifferent and obedient, feeling that they were well-represented by a careerist political class deeply embedded in public affairs. The rationalization of production, the predominance of finance and the expansion of the state apparatus provided the system with a sufficient social base, the

market with a considerable number of consumers, and the universities with a numerous contingent of students. Its social base was composed of civil servants, white collar employees, politicians, professionals, experts and so on, individuals whose status depended on academic training with a price tag on the labor market that was higher than the price of conventional labor power.

This whole “cognitariat” was so closely bound to the established order that it identified its fate with the preservation of that order. In the past, classical German social democracy perceived such emerging sectors, which it called “middle classes”, as a factor of stability; a sort of shield against the blows of the class struggle. In fact, the mentality of this motley sort of bourgeoisie that wore two hats, so to speak, was quite variable, but for the most part it was closer to that of the haute bourgeoisie than it was to that of the proletariat, and, as history was to reveal, in extreme conditions its attachment to the State led it to be more in favor of dictatorship than revolution. A half century after the Second World War, the historical situation had changed significantly and the liberal application of credit seemed to ensure the absolute victory of the economy and of professional politics. It is therefore not at all surprising that social activism ever since the end of the 1980s has taken place in an environment characterized by total passivity, an absence of dissent and an almost total conformism. Society was in the grips of a widespread feeling that confronting power was impossible, because the wage-earning majority had faith in the management of the party *du jour* and believed what the television told it, feeling quite comfortable in a private life colonized by the commodity and replete with gadgets. Revolution was little more than a dream and the partiocracy appeared to be the least evil of all political regimes, and besides, it was always subject to improvement. Few were those who believed that revolution was necessary, and its advent became an article of faith derived from ideological convictions similar to those of religion. The anti-system struggle was sidelined and the scarce conflicts that broke the surface after the capitalist unification of the world always ignored modernized misery and relied on the mediation of institutions and the media spectacle.

The proletarian defeat foreclosed the perspectives for class struggle in the seventies and eighties, and led to a theoretical disarmament of subversion that would prove to be long-lasting. In opposition to the revolutionary social critique, immersed in paralyzing contradictions that we shall not address here, a submissive and weak structure of thought was erected that, with an ostentatious pseudo-critique, condemned all radical change as impossible and, furthermore, as undesirable. For this way of thinking, every revolution conceals a totalitarian project. Thus, for this brand of servile thought, Marx and Bakunin were the founding fathers of revolutionary fundamentalism. The vulgar, pragmatic and

Third-Worldist Marxism that the revolutionary critique had denounced, would no longer be used as a toolbox for this reactionary philosophical trend. For the intellectual comfort of the enlightened middle classes, something less sacerdotal and more adapted to the euphoric triumphalism of the dominant powers was needed. Social disintegration, frivolity, consumerist hedonism, ephemeral commitments, identitarianism and short-sighted incrementalism, everyday features typical of the new capitalism, were turned into individual virtues that were to be preserved for the benefit of an alleged “freedom” that was actually trivial, and was to be administered by the State. The idea of Progress, the guiding principle of the ruling classes, could be abandoned without regrets by dissolving it in the exigencies of the eternal present. Postmodern philosophy perfected *cum laude* the task begun by Stalinist Marxism, a cold and lifeless ideology. This mother lode even produced ore for the mills of pseudo-extremism: a tremendously reactionary post-anarchism arose from the marriage of individualism and post-structuralism. The thought of power was academically reinvented with critical fragments scavenged from the class war, beating a dead horse and “thematizing” the new world order by way of a self-referential jargon particularly adapted to an ambivalent and relativist worldview. Words like “deconstruction”, “episteme”, “drive”, “simulacrum”, “counter-power”, “rhizome”, “schizo”, “meta-relation”, “heterotopia”, “biopolitics”, etc., allowed its proponents to both swim in the current of protest and to use the existing institutions as a changing room, combining disenchantment with the real revolution with the prestige of an apparent break from the norm. Coldly and with stoic resolve, academic reflection rid itself of concepts like “truth”, “ideology”, “class”, “totality”, “subject”, “reason”, “alienation”, “universality”, “memory”, “spectacle”, etc., which were notions that corresponded to what it called “modernity”, and culminated on the terrain of ideas in the social counterrevolution that then led to the current mass society. Henceforth, the dominant ideas were patently the ideas that were useful to domination.

This did not prevent contradictions from arising, however, as they spread from one sphere to another on a planetary scale. As a result, an ersatz class consciousness crystallized around a new abstract political subject, one that would take the world by storm, which the sociologists of postmodernity called the “citizenry”, and which others would later christen as the “multitude”, or simply as the “people”. In the mesocratic conception of the world, the State was ideally separated from Capital by means of a mental operation that drew from its sociological hat the “citizen”, a subject external to the economy, with the right to vote and to be represented by a political class. Likewise, the Present was set up as absolute reality and the most coarse and opportunistic pragmatism was treated as

a sign of the greatest political intelligence. Emancipatory ideals, insofar as they derived from old-fashioned grand narratives and insofar as they referred to the future, would no longer serve as guides for action, because the allegedly “libidinal” voting subject was alien to any social problem that could not *ipso facto* be translated into political terms and thus become the responsibility of licensed professionals. The civil society boosters were characterized by their firm belief that economic and social problems are actually political problems and must be addressed by way of elections. This is why they worshipped the State; they comprise the party of the State. And they are therefore opposed to any really autonomous movement: their pacifist, another-world-is-possible, and naively optimistic [*buenrollista*] initiatives, from their beginnings in Seattle and Genoa, were never intended to marginalize the parties or to put an end to capitalism, but to suggest new strategies and to call attention to new perspectives that were more in accordance with the specific interests of the class to which they belonged. “Another” capitalism was possible, just like another politics, and this is why they did not propose to bypass the existing institutions, but to work within them. A capitalism with the middle classes intact.

Finally, however, the bursting of the credit bubble not only brought the long period of continuous economic development to an abrupt end, but also threatened to take various States down with it. Budget cuts proliferated and unemployment, precarious jobs, and exclusion spread like wildfire, but among the most drastically affected layers of the population there was hardly any reaction. Public assistance, trade union and police controls worked effectively. The new damage-control measures implemented in response to the crisis, however, were also seriously deleterious for the salaried middle classes, which were major losers in the budget cuts and were furthermore burdened with significant debt. Unemployment hounded their footsteps, especially among recent college graduates, highlighting their special vulnerability to the wild swings of the economy, while government toleration of corruption and waste, as well as the bank bailout, aroused their indignation. Tired of fruitlessly petitioning the political class, some of them no longer felt that they were represented by that class. On May 15, 2011, the enraged youth poured into the streets and proclaimed their rejection of the big government parties, which they claimed were responsible for the “low quality” of “democracy”. This wave of discontent, manifested by way of social networks, the “civil society movements” and the “occupation” of public squares, persisted, for the most part, in seeking the least risky solution, that is, reform of the electoral process, which its supporters called “real democracy”, rather than the end of parliamentarism. At the same time, the movement for regional independence won majority support

in Catalonia for similar reasons. The civil society movement and nationalism were the first political responses of a portion of the population that had previously remained on the sidelines as spectators. The lumpenbourgeoisie reconstituted its political identity along with a kind of class consciousness, but not in opposition to capitalism, but to “the caste”, or, in the case of Catalonia, to “Madrid”, that is, some directed their opposition against the corrupt political oligarchy that had made the State its patrimony, and others directed their opposition directly against the central State itself, which they accused of keeping most of the taxes it collected from Catalonia. The ineffectiveness of exclusively symbolic demonstrations and the fascistic authoritarianism of the government drove the salaried middle classes to proceed beyond strategies limited to putting pressure on their political representatives, convinced that, in order to restore their pre-2008 status, they must oust the corrupt right-wing elements entrenched in the established institutions or even proclaim the “Catalonian Republic”, to install either a new social democracy or a moderate separatism. The middle classes wanted to be bailed out and rescued from proletarianization by a State, but given its present form, and given the collapse of the traditional parties, their salvation could only be brought by other parties and other, more resolute, alliances. The task that had to be accomplished was clearly laid out: to galvanize the students and the young people who were struggling to live on part-time and temporary jobs, along with the wage-earning masses and dissatisfied elements of the bourgeoisie, and align them all behind an electoral slate. As is to be expected in a spectacular society, the communications media facilitated this operation with much greater efficacy than the squalid “social movements”. In the 2014 elections for the European Parliament the new representatives of the salaried lumpenbourgeoisie, almost all of them former college students, occupied center stage on the political scene for the first time. In the regional and municipal elections of May 2015, the political scene was seriously transformed.

Those in the middle claimed to fight on behalf of those below them and those above them. The civil society-oriented middle class seized the initiative, but not as a universal class that was capable of representing the common interests of all the exploited classes. Its ambiguous stance, that was neither fish nor fowl, and was derived from its position in the economic process, allowed it full freedom of maneuver, although this same freedom was not granted to the radicals. This is easy to explain: the goal was to occupy political spaces, not to solve social problems. “The Social Democracy of the 21st Century” and other civil society tendencies were incapable of thinking about any other interests than their own, and therefore they had to limit themselves to seeking to change rulers rather

than the rules of the game; nor did they seek to bring an end to oppression, but rather to restore the previous, more buoyant material conditions of the “citizenry”, that is, their own conditions. This peculiar “democratization” of politics had the virtue of exhuming Stalinist cadavers like the IU and the ICV. It did not lead to the institutionalization of the “movements” by way of mechanisms of “citizens’ participation”; it simply explored the terrain, co-opted its leading figures and integrated or prevented protests. There was no better way to clear the streets than an electoral campaign. The popular opposition, too weak and confused to devote itself to an alternative project, succumbed to the conservative reflections of the middle classes and allowed itself to be led by them. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the autonomy of the oppressed masses was not reinforced by the partial victories of the civil society movement, or that the cause of social justice was not furthered. To the contrary, the presence of this new kind of politician was the decisive factor, alongside other more visible elements, in the stabilization of the participative caste, and conferred upon the latter an extra dose of legitimacy. The established order, far from having been weakened thanks to the exaltation of a permanent participatory assembly movement, has recovered its strength by arousing in its lost social base the expectations of a shared management of public expenditures and of a moderate change implemented by parliaments and municipal councils. In the meantime, the new politicians expend all their enthusiasm in post-election alliances, attempting to unite wherever possible the interests of the salaried middle classes with the administrative bureaucracy and with the “green sprouts” of the economy — especially in tourism, the new vanguard of the economy — because it is the latter factors that make the greatest contribution to capital formation and, to a lesser degree, to the creation of jobs.

Politics is not a sphere that is separate from economic activity or from the mass media, a sphere from which one can correct social problems thanks to the intervention of a specialized elite of leaders who rely on generalized passivity. Politics is that same spectacular economy camouflaged as social action. It is therefore not a neutral means, an empty form that can be filled with any content, but the specific form that, in capitalist society, imposes market relations on the public. The political liberty guaranteed to the “democratized” institutions in the offices corresponds in the final reckoning to the free market. Its purpose is not to establish direct connections between individuals, but to subject individuals to an external power, that of capital/state. Today’s new and improved partiocracy has not changed its nature; at most, it has become more theatrical and is trying harder to play up to the crowd. It must preserve the obsolete class remnants of the previous capitalist period without altering the

general progress of the world-economy, something that is hard to do without considerable growth, which the end of the cycle of economic development renders highly unlikely. The hypothesized extractive cycle based on the “sustainable” destruction of the territory has not proceeded here at the speed that has characterized its progress in Latin America, and the European situation is still deadlocked, with the civil society masses awaiting the next elections. If the crises and struggles that will ensue as a result do not lead to disruptions that result in a Failed State and, consequently, in the total collapse of the partiocracy, the movements of the salaried middle class, that is, those associated with the civil society movement and regional nationalism, their political expressions, will block any autonomous manifestation of a revolutionary subject, or, to put it another way, they will prevent the appearance of a truly assembly-based democracy that will fight against capitalism for an egalitarian social transformation of society. Anti-capitalist protests must become more widespread and must become powerful enough to render the institutional path unviable if they really want to abolish classes and collectively construct a self-governing, ecologically balanced, non-patriarchal, just society based on solidarity. The framework of the civil society movement must be shattered.

Miguel Amorós.

Transcript of a presentation delivered on September 26, 2015 at La Col.lectiva, Cabanyal, Valencia, Spain, during a conference on gentrification.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“La hora de la áurea medianía”**



## The Rise and Fall of Weak Thought

“Where utopia is rejected, thought itself dies.” (Adorno)

In 1848 the cycle of bourgeois revolutions reached its conclusion and the predominance of Hegelian thought came to an end. Nation-states, now equipped with parliaments and constitutions, were adapting to the new times, although not without having to devote some effort to the attempt to maintain an equilibrium between the opposed interests of the ruling classes. The bourgeoisie was no longer concerned with anything but accumulating wealth, which was more important than political power itself. It became conservative and was therefore hardly interested in history or in the connection between reality and philosophy, “*its own time comprehended in thoughts*”, according to Hegel. Philosophical praxis was separated from politics and science, losing its unity and consistency. Numerous systems emerged, among which one could make one’s choice: neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, utilitarianism, positivism, vitalism, Darwinism, existentialism, etc. According to G. Anders, post-Hegelian philosophical thought proved to be a return to the concept of a passive and featureless nature: man, morality, the State, society, were de-historicized and re-naturalized as concepts. In its contradictory transformations the new kind of philosophical reflection was the multifarious ideological expression of the conservative reaction within the bourgeoisie. Despite the degree of truth that some of its postulates may have possessed insofar as they revealed the limitations of German idealism, it was the manifestation in the arena of speculation of the radical change of course of the bourgeois class.

The development of the proletariat contributed a new kind of conflict, shifting the scene of the revolution to the workshops and the factories. The workers movement became interested in the social and natural sciences, the evolution of species and health, pedagogy and literature, but in none of its sectors did it feel the need for a specific kind of thought as a real component of the revolutionary process. The class conscious proletariat remained mired in a naturalist conception of the world. It was a quite widespread belief at the time that neither Marxism nor anarchism had anything to do with philosophy and that no one posed the need for a “working class” philosophy<sup>32</sup>. While

---

<sup>32</sup> This prejudice was, of course, not absolutely valid. Joseph Dietzgen (1828-1888), a German proletarian autodidact (he was a tanner), spent much of his life attempting to work out the basis for a

anarchism was considered to be “*the most rational and practical conception of a harmonious and free social life*” (Berkman), and Marxism was seen more as a scientific theory of social evolution and a critical general sociology, with respect to philosophical principles the most outstanding thinkers of both camps did not proceed beyond a vulgar, naturalistic and scientific materialism. As for anarchism, the defeat of the Commune and the dissolution of the International played a major role in its subsequent evolution by highlighting the profound differences between its working class tendency, at first Bakuninist, and then communist and syndicalist, and its individualist, Stirnerite tendency, which rejected the internationalist working class character of the former tendency and defended private property. On the social democratic side, meanwhile, two main currents arose, the reformist and the revolutionary. Both considered themselves to be Marxist, but for the former, Marxism was a neutral theory of the knowledge of the laws that govern society, laws that are necessary for the rational development of the productive forces, while for the latter, Marxism was no less than “*the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletarian class*” (Korsch). The First World War excavated an even deeper and wider abyss between the two camps, and, once the Russian Revolution broke out, the first revolution that was allegedly carried out in accordance with Marxist teachings, the relation between Marxism and philosophy was swept under the rug.

The philosophical dispute that took place in 1924 pitted the revolutionary Marxists, who championed a Hegelian-Marxist dialectical methodology, against the social democratic Marxists and the “Marxist-Leninists”. The latter, basing their arguments on the book, *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism*, sought to establish a party-centered Marxist philosophy on bourgeois philosophical foundations similar to those expounded by the social democratic ideologues. The defeat of the German proletariat in October and November of 1923 and the rapid development in Russia of a kind of State capitalism implacably led by a usurper bureaucracy speaking in the name of the revolution, decided this dispute in favor of Leninism. Thus, even before the Bolshevik dictatorship became a totalitarian hell and before the Soviet bureaucracy became an authentic exploiting class, “Marxism” itself was transformed, by way of Leninism, into a kind of bourgeois materialism, dualist and mechanistic, deterministic and positivist, a bizarre ideology at the service of a totalitarian State, just like its future Italian and German counterparts. The anarchists, too,

---

socialist philosophy based on dialectical materialism, independently of Marx, who called him “the philosopher of socialism” and “one reader who really understood Capital”. His most famous book is *The Nature of Human Brain Work* (1869) (Translator’s note).

had come out on the losing end of Russian and German revolutions, and their greatest concern at the time was to publicize their role in these revolutions, which was being portrayed in a distorted fashion by the communists of all tendencies, rather than to construct a philosophy that would reconstitute their legacy since Proudhon and the International in a coherent whole. To the contrary, the need for simple and systematic explanations of the “idea” became the most urgent task, and this is why Alexander Berkman himself wrote an *ABC of Libertarian Communism*<sup>33</sup>. The best formulations of Anarchosyndicalism were conceived between 1930 and 1938, in the reorganization of the workers movement on the Iberian Peninsula (Pierre Besnard’s *The Workers Trade Unions and the Social Revolution*) and during the Spanish Revolution (in Rudolf Rocker’s *Anarchosyndicalism: Theory and Practice*, for example). After that, nothing until Daniel Guérin’s *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, at the beginning of a new revolutionary cycle inscribed in the downfall of the Fordist model of development.

In the wake of the First World War, the social crisis served as the spur for intellectual innovations not just for the Western bourgeoisie, but also for the Stalinist bureaucracy, which took two forms, or, rather, took the form of two idealisms, one subjective and the other objective. The bourgeoisie, always more tempted by providential saviors, dictatorships and Nazi adventures, had lost all of its initial liberal democratic optimism. It did not contemplate the world as its own world, but as something alien and neutral in the face of which the individual constituted himself as “being”, disinterested in politics, morality or social action. The category of action – praxis – was definitively abandoned by the revisionist philosophy of the period between the two World Wars, whether to entrench itself in a defeatist position, or to unconditionally praise the established power. Heidegger was the most representative philosopher of that era. The proletariat hardly stirred. As for the Soviet bureaucracy, it preserved the optimism of a rising class, even though it was just as incapable as its competitor and ally – the declining bourgeoisie – of understanding anything more about reality than what its class interests dictated that it must know. It considered itself to be the exclusive interpreter of the interests of the oppressed classes, and therefore the leader of the revolution and helmsman of history. Stalinist philosophy was therefore not limited to concealing the truth with legitimating fantasies – the essence of things expressed in ideas – but instead

---

<sup>33</sup> This is the title of the Spanish translation: *El ABC del comunismo libertario* (tr. Marcos Ponsa González-Vallarino, La Malatesta, Buenos Aires, 2009). Originally published in English under the title, *Now and After: the ABC of Communist Anarchism* (Vanguard Press, New York, 1929). The most recent edition is entitled *The ABC of Anarchism* (Freedom Press, London, 1977). (Translator’s note.)

actually produced its own rituals, heroes and myths, dressed up in scientific and determinist verbiage. In this context, it was indistinguishable from religion. The Party, the Politburo, the State, the Supreme Leader, the Revolution, Socialism ... all comprised a litany of puffed-up, empty images – the elements of a concentrated spectacle, as Debord said – that were intended to consolidate its power with claims of its objectivity and universality. The attack on Reason was undertaken on two fronts and in two distinct ways: from the perspective of subjective irrationality, dissolving the concepts of alienation, subject, class, truth, ideology, history, memory, humanity, etc., in those of the isolated individual, the will, the life force, existence, nature, homeland, and so on; and from that of objective irrationality, with the same old rationalistic language, but vacated of all content. The idea of freedom was thus radically transformed, so that it no longer had anything to do with the untrammelled self-determination of the community, but rather involved a being-there of the individual within an amoral and asocial chaos, in which the individual endured with indifference, when not with blind obedience, those who were the self-proclaimed representatives of fate or historical necessity.

Of course, rational thought did not entirely surrender to either the blows of the existentialists or the pragmatists, or the irrationality of the Marxist-Stalinists, nor did it give up when faced with the contradictions inherent to Reason itself. The victory of the capitalist powers and Soviet totalitarianism did, however, deprive rational thought of any chance that it might be widely disseminated, and it was therefore isolated in intellectual circles, marginal publications, provincial universities and intellectual projects of greater or lesser influence, such as the Institute for Social Research (the authors of the Frankfurt School and others affiliated with them), the Collège de Sociologie (Bataille), the magazines *Politics* (MacDonald) and *Le Contrat Social* (Souvarine, Papaioannou), the Regional Planning Association of America (Mumford), etc. Protected by the meager initial impact of their research projects, isolated from the socialist media, and removed from everyday political conflicts, without any dialectical relation with the totality of the social process and therefore without any useful application, the importance of theoretical social critique nevertheless underwent a boom of sorts with the outbreak of a new revolutionary cycle in the highly developed capitalist countries during the 1960s. Its proponents constituted a bridge between two eras; it would be the task of others to assimilate it and to practice it; in fact, this task would fall on the shoulders of the protagonists of the revolts, the new rebels. It could not be irrefutably claimed that this task would not face almost unconquerable challenges, and by this we are not referring only to the forces of repression and the counter-propaganda

marshaled by the existing order, but to the cage of Stalinism which, under diverse forms, for the most part Third-Worldism, seduced a large part of the revolutionary youth of the time. Yet the social critique did make progress, accompanying the real movement. The French May '68 was the high point of the "second proletarian assault on class society", as it was defined by the Situationist International, the only collective project that grasped the revolutionary potential of the era and that called attention to the points where the lever of revolt could best be applied. The situationist critique was the most coherent and innovative critique, formulating radical demands that, given the depth of the crisis, could be posed on a massive scale. But it did not find its proletariat, except for during a few brief moments, since the quest for theoretical consciousness on the part of the working class of the 1960s did not last very long. The S.I. delivered the *coup de grâce* to Stalinism and laid the foundations for a truly subversive radical critique, but its triumphs would only benefit the new amorphous and submissive generations, who were reluctant to leave the capitalist refuge to endorse revolutionary projects, the pillars of a victorious class that knew how to absorb and integrate their contributions.

Once the autonomous proletariat was defeated, the strategic objective of domination would be the eradication of its autonomy, whose first step would be realized by a project of theoretical disarmament. Everything that revolutionary thought had helped to bring to consciousness had to be erased from the social imagination; but the old positivist Marxism was defunct. Pseudo-radical academic reflection then became the ideal instrument by which the existing order would recover the terrain of ideas by way of the recuperation of conveniently denatured critical fragments, an easy task given the fact that the conditions of intellectual degradation that prevailed in the university milieu of the time created a favorable environment for falsification. The stars of recuperation acquired a notoriety that would have been unthinkable only a few years before. Thus, these thinkers in the pay of the State made themselves comfortable for a while amidst the theoretical debris of previous struggles – which had been rendered inoffensive by the defeat of the movement – as a necessary stage in the process leading to the advance of submission, and in order to bring about a situation in which revolutionary illusions would no longer be necessary. With a proletariat wallowing in modernized misery, ideas were no longer dangerous: any small-time professor could challenge any point of the old orthodoxy and propose a shoddy and fictitious alternative. The trick consisted in being extremely critical with regard to the details, but apologetic towards the existing order in one's conclusions. A submissive thought standing guard over subversive appearances was the most appropriate kind for a power

that was based on certain wage-earning middle classes and a proletariat sinking into disorder, which, since both these categories were still under the influence of the recent disturbances, dreamed of a revolution that they did not really want and which in any case they were incapable of carrying out even if they wanted it. Consumers of ideology, they wanted both the prestige of revolt and the tranquility of order. This “revolutionary” phase of the ruling ideology, however, came to an end as soon as the perspective of class war vanished in the western world. In a very short span of time, immersion in private life, the preponderance of individual interests and the satisfaction of immediate needs produced such a generalized lack of consciousness that the road of weak thought was definitively cleared of all obstacles. The disconnection of social life and public life allowed the abundance of commodities to satisfy the manipulated desires of the masses and to make it possible to satisfy their spiritual cravings with increasingly more simple substitutes. In 1979, the year when the adjective “postmodern” made its debut in its currently-accepted sense, the concept of revolution had already been easily demolished: with the proletariat in a dormant state, history could be re-defined as a “narrative” or “story”, that is, as a lullaby, a minor literary genre within which the revolution was reduced to a mere make-believe “event”. The revolution, however, was not exactly the object of the desire of these postmodern thinkers. This gang of “neo-philosophers” – most of them former Maoists – condemned revolution and universality as the road to totalitarianism. At last, the zealous intelligentsia was in an ideal position to confront an almost-extinct subversion. Order returned to society and these neo-thinkers became fashionable, casting aside their disguises and openly proclaiming their liquidationist goals. The end of utopia: not a few of them abominated May ’68 as revolution and praised it as modernization. These fashionable ideas were revealed for what they were, the ideas of domination. The ruling class that emerged transformed after the decomposition of the workers movement and the restructuring of capitalism, finally discovered a thought that was unmistakably its own, its own philosophy that perfectly reflected its nature and the new condition of its rule, the postmodern condition. In the well-paid world of academia, armed with an arsenal of ambiguous and murky categories expressed in self-referential jargon, yesterday’s post-structuralist and semiologist recuperators worked on its “thematization”.

There can be no doubt that reactionary postmodern thought was confected on the basis of one-sided interpretations of Nietzsche, above all, although Heidegger, Kant, Husserl, Lacan and Freud also lent a hand, to the extent that they were useful for the labor of destroying Reason. Rationalist philosophy had created universal values, postulating a progressive access to consciousness that

in its final stage would make humanity capable of self-government in freedom. The category of universality put an end to the differences of birth, fate, gender, wealth, class, nation... Its realization was a conflict-ridden process: hence the importance given to history as the history of liberation struggles. In its most radical formulations, revolutions constituted violent emergency solutions. Nietzsche questioned the reality of this emancipatory process, denying the *telos* or purpose of history and broaching the unconscious and obscure dimension – the Dionysian dimension – of human societies. He sought to prove that the foundations of Reason were not rational and that history was not evolving in accordance with a predetermined plan. The cleverness of Reason that derived general goals from individual passions was therefore a Hegelian fallacy. Moreover, Reason, by seizing upon “Life” destroyed it, and so, for the good of Life, Reason must be jettisoned. This would become, in a somewhat simplified form, the task that would inspire the first elaborators of the weak philosophy of postmodernity – Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida – and their genealogical, rhizomatic and deconstructive procedures. We cannot deny the theoretical enigma that arose from the cruel materialization of the idea of Progress, as expressed in the experience of the totalitarian states, and in the triumph of capitalism that Adorno, Benjamin, Bataille and others, each in their own way, attempted to resolve without needing to renounce Reason or making concessions to irrationalism. The critiques of reason and its historical meaning, however, were condemned to languish in enlightened circles, in the absence of an agent-subject that would be capable of making use of their results and implementing them in practice. Unfortunately, this subject, the revolutionary working class, had ceased to exist during the 1980s. The great achievement of capitalism was precisely this: the dissolution of the connections that linked individuals with their own kind, to their neighbors and to their class, thanks to the absolute privatization of life brought about by the disintegration of the social fabric by the techno-economic colonization of everyday life. History was not the stage where a conscious humanity was recreated to liberate itself. In practice, History was annihilated in an eternal present where no one experienced being or becoming, but merely existed. Consequently, the theoretical annihilation of the subject of consciousness had to be one of the first objectives of submissive thought. It was necessary to complete the capitalist victory on the field of ideas, but not by using the usual tool of falsification, academic Marxism, but by innovating in the art of dissolving the truth in the lie and reality in the spectacle. The spiritual conditions of late capitalism – disconnection from the past, forgetting, loss of the value of experience, anomie,

pseudo-identities – favored this operation by also providing it with the semblance of the prestige of a daring break with the past.

By disposing of the category of the totality, apologetic commentaries destroyed the truth and transformed it into *doxa*, opinion, interpretation, *bucle* [?]. As a result, all philosophical systems seemed to have become nothing but *doxa*. The milestones of thought are no longer contemplated as moments of its development, but as a pile of more or less useful debris. Any claim can be challenged (and “deconstructed”) by proving its invalidity *a la carte*. Objectivity is lost, essence is diluted and content is evacuated: in the end the true cannot be distinguished from the false. Politically, the relativism of such an interpretive delirium leads to submission to the prevailing order: nothing is true, support for anything is permitted. The result is a garden variety nihilism which, in its most strikingly negative aspects, has penetrated all obsolete ideologies, from Marxism to anarchism, hybridizing with them to a certain extent. In the most representative works of servile consciousness, Power does not appear as an extreme development of social hierarchy or as a product of certain relations that have been disorganized by capital, but as the substance that impregnates life, from the highest to the lowest social strata. Power, like God, is everywhere, in the offices of Multinationals, in state institutions and in workers assemblies, but especially at the very roots of the much-denigrated truth. In this context, it was not at all surprising that a genius discovered the unsullied truth in Khomeini’s Iran. The second wave of postmodernists, like Baudrillard, even claimed that reality does not exist, that it is a simulacrum. Others defined it as a “discourse”. A curious way to “interpret” Debord. The concept of the spectacle, however, derived from the concept of alienation, and referred to very palpable realities such as the relations between persons mediated by images, the ultimate form of commodity fetishism. Individuals were alienated as passive spectators of a representation of themselves that was created by others, the agents of domination. Thus, all their activities, in production, thought, and play... were not really their own, but were designed and determined by rules established for the exclusive economic profit of the ruling class. Nonetheless, alienation was not an ineluctable fate, but a historical phenomenon that could, just as it had arisen, also be brought to an end. Suddenly. It is not at all surprising that for the postmodernists alienation was the main concept that was targeted for attack after that of the revolution. Without it, outright rejection of the dominant regime lost all justification. If reality was something more than just a spectacle, the copy was not as legitimate as the original.

As capitalism proletarianized the world with the inestimable help of technology, industrial conditions of existence were generalized and the



postmodern mentality spread. The reflections of postmodernism were the most appropriate for the intellectual comfort of the middle level strata that had arisen during the phases of economic growth. We are referring to the wage earning middle classes, equipped with college degrees and very much at home with communications technologies [*hiperconectadas*]. The most common characteristics of everyday life in the turbo-capitalist regime are one hundred percent pre-established in these categories: narcissism, existential void, frivolity, consumerism, lack of any firm commitments, fear, isolation, emotional and relationship problems, vapid gregariousness, worship of success, political “realism”, etc., all of which were transformed into the public ideal of the postmodern condition. The “French ideology” – as Castoriadis called it – despite its obscurity and vacuity, or rather precisely because of these aspects, was perfectly suited to the trivial nature of those sectors of the population, who comprise the social base of domination. The function of postmodern speculation, however, had other features: whenever a real anti-capitalist movement emerged, it was soon joined along the way by the civil society movement and by the advocates of progress and reform, inhibiting the crystallization of not only really antagonistic practice, but also really critical, anti-developmental thought. The critique of postmodernism currently performs the role that was once performed by the critique of the Marxist-Leninist religion, now that technological mass society performs the role of the old class society.

The first major difficulty faced by radical critique is that of discovering its subject, since the communities of struggle that have arisen from contemporary conflicts are usually not strong enough or stable enough to constitute such a subject. The presence of the middle classes turns conflicts into “communities of carnival” or “make-believe communities”, in the expression of Z. Bauman, that is, masses gathered together in spectacles, without common interests but with a shared, short-term illusion, a momentary identity, that serves to provide an outlet for the tension built up in the daily routine. In this type of pseudo-community, as soon as the festive protests come to an end, everything remains the same as it was before. The most harmful effect of the protest-spectacles of the last few years, by dispersing the energy of real social conflicts in ceremonial twenty-one gun salutes, has been the aborting of the development of real combatant communities. The avalanche of gestures of dissatisfaction buries any attempt at rational communication, and that is why contemporary assemblies shun debate and revel in expressions of emotion, attracting an endless array of neurotic and mentally disturbed personalities. It is obvious that if crises are not serious enough to generate irreconcilable antagonisms and to seriously threaten

the survival of a part of society, the emotional plague will always deactivate real conflicts, and postmodern fragments will contaminate all well-intentioned reflections. The immediate task of anti-developmental radical critique will therefore consist in denouncing the psycho-political mechanisms of control and the mesocratic mentality in which those mechanisms are rooted, but always in the name of Reason. Anders, Marcuse, Reich and Freud can be of great help in this cause. However, the long-term endeavor is that of confronting the crisis of the idea of Progress, of History and of Reason itself – the crisis of capitalist society – without returning to the fold by succumbing to irrationality or an esthetic of rustic escapism. The symptoms of the historical social crisis must be explained without ever abandoning Reason, which, as Horkheimer says, is “*the fundamental category of philosophical thought, the only one capable of uniting it with the destiny of Humanity.*” In conclusion, one must pursue utopia, which is nothing but a reason *sui generis*.

Miguel Amorós, October 12, 2015.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Genealogía del pensamiento débil”**

## Libertarian Critique and the Left Wing of Capitalism

Capital has proletarianized the world and at that same time has visibly abolished classes. If antagonisms have been integrated, if there is no class struggle, then there are no classes. And there are no trade unions in the genuine sense of the term. In effect, if the scandal of the social cleavage between possessors and the dispossessed, between leaders and led, between exploiters and exploited, has ceased to be the principal source of conflict, and if struggles take place within—and without questioning—the system, there are no classes in struggle, but masses adrift. The trade unions, the corpse of a dissolved class, pursue a different goal: to preserve the fiction of a labor market. The worker is the basis of capital, not its negation. Capital seizes upon every activity and its principle structures all of society: it realizes labor, it transforms the world into a world of workers. This implies the end of a separate working class outside of and opposed to capital, and the generalization of wage labor. Within, there is nothing but wage earning, although not uniform, but rather fragmented, masses: each fragment occupies a rung in the social hierarchy corresponding to its buying power. Without, there is an excluded and written-off mass of people who are striving to be reintegrated. Each layer is defined by its capacity for consumption. The middle classes, the quantitative remnants of the disappearance of social antagonisms, are reinforced as they rise above the old petty bourgeoisie in the form of wage earning college graduates engaged in unproductive labor. These classes were born with the rationalization and bureaucratization of the capitalist regime, and underwent further expansion thanks to the progressive tertiarization of the economy (and of the technology that made this trend possible). They consist of a mass of executives, white collar employees and civil servants amidst a market society. When the economy functions, all of them are pragmatic, and therefore supporters of the established order, that is, of the *partiocracy*. The *partiocracy* is what we call the political regime ordinarily adopted by capitalism. This is an authoritarian government of the highest echelons of the parties (without separation of powers), the modern form of an oligarchy, which entails the formation of an autonomous bureaucracy with its own particular interests and its own clientele that has made politics its *modus vivendi*. Even more than the bourgeoisie, the middle classes

view the State as the mediator between the logic of the market and civil society, or, more precisely, between private interests and their own particular interests that are presented as public interests. And it was precisely the separation between public and private that gave rise to the administrative-political bureaucracy, an essential part of the middle classes. The participative State determines, in one way or another, their private existence. In favorable conditions, which allow for a consumerist lifestyle, these classes are not politicized; it is the crisis of the so-called *Welfare State* that causes their politicization. Then, the parties created by the crisis speak in the name of all of society, and consider themselves to be its most authentic representatives.

We are immersed in a crisis that is not just economic but total: it is the crisis of capitalism. It is manifested both on the structural plane, in the impossibility of sufficient growth, as well as on the territorial plane, with the destructive effects of generalized industrialization. The consequences are the multiplication of inequalities, exclusion, pollution, climate change, austerity and increasing social control. During the stage of globalization (when the working class no longer exists) a highly visible divorce took place between the professional politicians and the masses who had to endure the consequences of globalization. The gap between these two sectors grew larger when the crisis reached and impoverished the middle classes, the submissive base of the partyocracy. In the countries of southern Europe the civil society ideology perfectly reflects their reaction to being abandoned in that fashion. Unlike the old proletariat, which framed the question in social terms, these classes pose it exclusively in political terms. They must therefore resort to the ruling language, that of domination, preferentially employing the progressive and democratic vocabulary that best corresponds to their mental universe. This entails that they speak as if they were a universal class, the *citizenry*, whose mission consists in reforming a *low quality* democracy. The ideology that best reflects this transformation, the *civil society ideology*, is a legalist democratism that reproduces, with one cliché after another, the bourgeois liberalism of the past, and with a lot of verbal fireworks attempts to correct its course by turning it a little towards the left. It considers *democracy*, that is, the parliamentary system of parties, as a categorical imperative. Thus, formally, it is situated on the left of the system. It is the left wing of capitalism.

The crisis, viewed in its political aspect, is a crisis of the traditional party system and, needless to say, of the two-party system. The corruption of cronyism, lying, waste, and embezzlement of public funds, only becomes scandalous when unemployment, cutbacks in public services, wage cuts, and higher taxes reach a certain level. Then the old parties are not enough to

guarantee the stability of the partiocracy. Most of the new parties and alliances, led for the most part by professors and lawyers, are trying to replace a bad bureaucratic clique with a good one to win the support of the moderate voters of the left or of the right, a task that neo-Stalinism and leftism were never able to perform. In fact, what they are trying to do is to play the role of a new social democracy or a new center party, not to mention those who are looking for a solution in the politics of regional separatism. Their declared intentions are not serious, which is why they cannot expect any immediate, profound electoral, juridical or constitutional reforms, much less the transformation of the *regime of 1978*. First of all, the wave of candidates who have won elections on the civil society platform must work to construct new political majorities, or, as they say, assure governability, since no one wants a social rupture, even if that is the price that must be paid for splitting the national state. The demobilizations that have followed the various campaigns testify to this fact. The tactic of the left wing of capital is obvious: it is aware of the fact that the State is essential for capitalism and that in periods of economic expansion this dependence allows for *social* policies, that is, a diversion of a share of the profits towards the pockets of the most disadvantaged. A little neo-Keynesianism added to neoliberal practices to support the State. Here we see the utopia of the distribution State: a *social State*, but in the framework of a *market-based Europe*. The civil society strategy of *assault on the institutions* is based above all on the conformist voters who are disappointed with the same old parties and to a lesser extent with the social movements led by careerists and celebrities. Although the crisis cannot be overcome, since it is “a long-term depression on a global scale” according to the experts, this fact must be dissimulated by reconstructing the State as helper and mediator, and focusing attention on the spectacle of its reconstruction.

In the final analysis, this civil society movement is not about changing society but about managing capitalism — inside or outside of the Eurozone — with the least expense and with as little repression as possible for the middle classes. It is about showing that another road of capitalist accumulation is possible and that the *bailout of persons* is just as important as the bailout of banks, that is, although it is necessary for the middle classes to make some sacrifices, there will nonetheless be neither development nor progress without them. Therefore, appeals are made to efficacy and realism, not to big changes and revolutions. Dialogue, voting and alliances are the weapons of the civil society movement, not mass demonstrations or general strikes. It wants a direct dialogue with power, a virtual dialogue with those “persons” mentioned above. The middle classes are, more than any other classes, nonviolent and computer literate: their identity is determined by fear and the internet. In their pure state, that is, when they are not

contaminated by elements that are more susceptible to the appeal of racism or xenophobia, such as indebted farmers, uprooted workers or lumpenized rabble, they only want a peaceful and gradual change of the status quo from within. However, in these times of economic reconversion, of extractivism and austerity, the civil society parties must content themselves with symbolic institutional actions, since their capacity for solving social problems is very small. They rely on the world situation, that of the Market, and the latter is not favorable for them and probably will not be favorable for them in the future. In short, their photo ops must cover up their lack of results while they wait for better times, awaiting, or rather fearing, the rise of other more resolute forces in one sense (a much more formidable totalitarianism) or another (the revolution).

Capitalism is in decline, but its decline is not felt equally everywhere. In the south of Europe the crisis is interpreted as an economic threat and as a political problem. In the north, it tends to be viewed as an Islamic invasion and a terrorist threat, that is, as a problem of borders and security. There, everything depends on the skin color, the nationality and the religion of the *working poor*. The south is mostly Europeanist and opposed to austerity; the north is entirely the opposite. The mesocratic reaction is contradictory because, on the one hand, it is dominated by the illusion of reform and openness, while on the other hand, national particularism and the need for absolute control of the population are being imposed. Its proponents do not view the crisis as a multiple crisis: financial, demographic, urban, ecological and social. Libertarians must denounce this state of affairs by attempting to construct autonomous protest movements on the social terrain and that of everyday life and must defend them. Political abstention is a first step towards secession from the system. The political perspective can be overcome by way of a radical change — or rather a return to the beginnings — in the way we act and in the way we live by supporting those extra-mercantile relations that capitalism has not been able to destroy or the memory of which it has not yet erased. And also by way of a return to the concrete in the way we think: the critique of the postmodern bourgeois worldview is more urgent than ever before, because an escape from capitalism is not conceivable with a consciousness that is colonized by the values of its domination. The necessary de-acculturation (disalienation) that destroys all the *make-believe identities* (as Bauman calls them) with which the system rewards us, must seriously challenge parliamentarism, the State, the idea of progress, developmentalism, the spectacle ... but not in order to offer new improved versions of those same things. And we must not attempt to elaborate a single theory with answers and formulas for everything, a kind of modern *Kathedersozialismus* [academic, reformist, bourgeois socialism], or contrive an

entelechy (*a strong people, proletarian class, nation*) that would justify an arch-militant, vanguard organizational model, nor should we literally return to the past, but, we insist, it is a matter of leaving the mental and material universe of capitalism by taking our inspiration from historical examples of non-capitalist ways of living together. A big part of the revolutionary task is restoration.

It is true that anti-capitalist struggles are still weak and often recuperated, but if they can survive and then spread beyond the local scale they may extend far enough to overthrow the institutional way along with the servile way of life that upholds it. At this point, the crisis is still only half a crisis. The system has come up against its internal limits (economic stagnation, restriction of credit, insufficient accumulation, falling rate of profit), but has not yet reached the last straw with regard to its external limits (energy, environment, culture, social issues). A much more profound crisis is needed that would accelerate the dynamic of disintegration, that would make the system unviable and stimulate the rise of new forces capable of restoring the social fabric with fraternal methods, in accordance with non-mercantile rules (as in Greece), while also articulating an effective defense (as in Rojava). However, the crisis in itself leads to ruin, not to liberation, unless the excluded attain a new dignity and unless such oppositional forces that do arise concentrate a sufficient power outside of the institutions. The current strategy (the use of exclusion and social struggles for the attainment of a higher goal) must lead — both with regard to the everyday construction of alternatives as well as the day-to-day defensive struggle — in the direction of the formation of a rooted, autonomous, conscious and combative community.

Libertarians do not want to survive in an inhuman capitalism with a democratic face and even less under a dictatorship that rules in the name of freedom. They do not pursue goals different from those of the masses in revolt, and therefore must not organize on their own account within or outside of the struggles. They do not recognize any kind of social contract as the basic principle of society, nor do they recognize the struggle of each against all; nor is their struggle based on tradition, progress, religion, the nation or nature. Libertarian communism is a social system characterized by communal property and structured by solidarity or mutual aid as its essential correlate. In this social system, labor — collective or individual — never loses its natural form to adopt an abstract and fantastic form. Technologies are accepted provided that they do not alter the egalitarian and solidarity-based functioning of society. Stability is prioritized over growth, and territorial equilibrium over production. Relations between individuals are always direct, not mediated by the commodity, which is why all the institutions that are derived from these relations are equally direct,

both with regard to their forms as well as their content. Its institutions are based in society and are not separated from it. Now is the time for a new historical society that is free of alienating mediations and constraints, without institutions that plan from above, without the labor-commodity, without a market and without wage workers. The proletariat only exists in capitalism due to the division between manual labor and intellectual labor. Similarly, the conurbations are the products of the absurd separation between the countryside and the city. A self-managed society has no need for employees and civil servants because the public is not separated from the private. It must turn its back on complexity and simplify. A free society is a fraternal, horizontal and balanced, de-industrialized, de-urbanized and anti-patriarchal society without a state. In it, the territory recovers its lost importance, for, unlike the current society, it will be a society with roots.

Miguel Amorós

Notes for a lecture scheduled to be delivered at  
La Cimade, Béziers (France) on January 29, 2016.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Genealogía del pensamiento débil”**



## Interview with Ruta 66

He is not an expert on rock music, but he wrote a very revealing socio-political analysis that rescued rock n'roll's revolutionary dimension from oblivion. A powerful critical voice, well-versed in anarchism and situationism, under his outward appearance of a mild-mannered retiree reluctantly relegated to a passive existence simmers an unquenchable thinker. His ideas help us to understand the world in which we (do not) live.

Even the dead have to fight for the truth. The protagonist of Maupassant's short story, "Was It a Dream?", goes to the cemetery to mourn at the grave of his beloved who had died unexpectedly. There, he witnesses an extraordinary scene. "I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, substituting the truth instead... They were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the terrible and the holy truth of which everybody was ignorant, or pretended to be ignorant, while they were alive." Even greater was the shock of the terrified widower when he saw that his deceased wife was no exception. On her tombstone, where he had caused to be engraved, "She loved, was loved, and died", now he read, "Having gone out in the rain one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold and died."

It seems that what really bothers us about what we do not accomplish before we die is no longer the collision with the truth about ourselves, but rather with the truth about what determines our lives; perhaps because we are annoyed by just how obvious it is. Many wise voices have spoken out to tell us this, but one of the most resonant is that of the historian and essayist, Miguel Amorós (Alcoy, 1949). An avid seeker after this truth about the situation that they have programmed us to accept with lies and substitutes for life, his talks and writings constitute expressions of some of the most stimulating examples of contemporary Spanish critical thought. The occasion of the publication of another book by this author has given us an opportunity to enjoy, question and/or learn from his lucidity.

**Jaime Gonzalo, for Ruta 66:** *You converted to anarchism at the age of 18, at a time when the anarchist movement had been practically neutralized in the collective memory of Spain, and you founded or co-founded several anarchist organizations. A risky decision, fraught with sacrifice, in view of the fact that you*

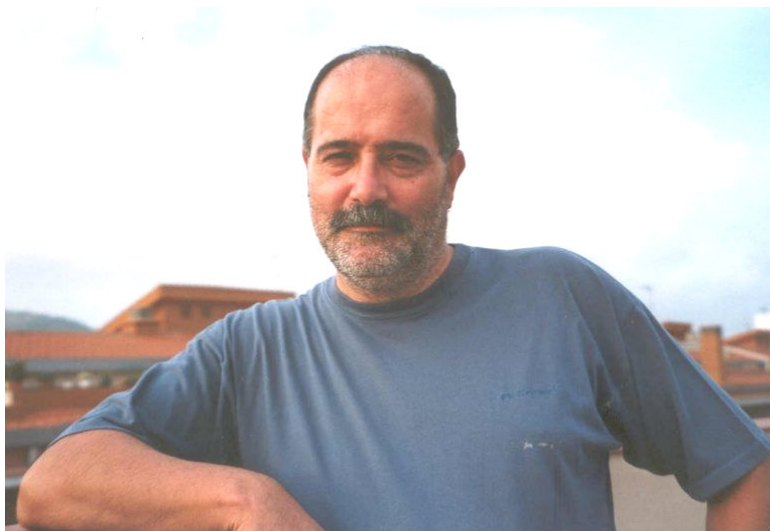
*lived in Franco's Spain and your family had a background in that movement and you knew what fate might await you... What are your impressions of this venture, what led you to make such a decision and what real possibilities did you think existed at the time that you thought you might take advantage of?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Damned Wikipedia! I never converted to anything, it was not a matter of religious faith. I come from a classic working class family that was traumatized by the years immediately following the war, a miserable time of repression and poverty. In Alcoy, a city with deep roots in the anarchist and syndicalist movements, there was not a single soul committed to the cause of the workers who was not in hiding, in jail or in exile. Although the figure of my maternal grandfather was very much present in my family's memory, I was never given too many details. The mentality of the survivor for whom nothing good can come from remembering the past: that was the limbo in which these matters resided during my entire adolescence. The road of rebellion arose for me as a kind of spiritual rash. The prospect that life offered was a good job, marriage with children, a house with a mortgage, a compact car and a television, the idiot box. Others have more effectively described this feeling of internal emptiness and anxiety that one suffers when at the end of puberty one is pushed to submerge oneself "in the glacial water of egoistic calculation" (Marx). I did not want to live the way I was ordered to live, wallowing in the mud of conventionality and repeating the vulgar gestures of the philistines. I found the authoritarianism that seemed to impregnate the anodyne life of my contemporaries distasteful, and I was even more repelled by its corollary, compulsory submission. I was curious and unsettled, I was eager to have some fun and to break things and I also had a strong desire to live—which at that age has a strong component of sexual desire. That's how it all began. Anarchism came later, when I went to college and I came up against "*carrillismo*", the Spanish Stalinism of the sixties, which was just as reactionary as its previous republican version. My "conversion" was not due to readings on this topic because no such texts existed at the time, but rather to an instinctive reaction against the opportunism of people whose vocation was to become manipulative and dictatorial bureaucrats, and who passed themselves off as the vanguard of the opposition to Franco.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *You paid a high price for the experience, you were sentenced to prison. What was it like in prison and what did you learn behind bars?*

**Miguel Amorós:** My bad adventures and, why not, my bad reading, led me to prison. My father told me it was the latter, and by bad reading he meant all of the reading I had been doing. I was only in "the slammer" for a little while, I

don't think I did four months, each in a different prison. None of them exist today, of course. The former prison in Valencia is now an office building of the Generalitat and the Alicante prison is now used for temporary detention of convicted criminals. My family was keeping a very close watch over me and they did not let me down. I did not learn much from life in prison, but I did find it diverting. There was a higher proportion of good people among the ordinary prisoners in the prison than there was on the outside, and there was a vast number of stories to hear, true or invented. The worst thing about the experience was the subsequent consequences. When I was released, there was a file on me and I was forbidden from entering the University district. I could not work as a teacher, or have a passport, or even hang out at the gym, because all of these things required a certificate of "good conduct". Then I burned my bridges. I never looked back.



**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Recently there have been occasional news reports in the disinformation media referring to the capture and dismantling of anarchist cells. It is hard to believe, after the ideological purge carried out during the 80s with the advent of "democracy", that there is still any real anarchism left in Spain, except in the framework of an excuse to carry out repression. This anarchist path, is it exhausted, does it make any sense in today's world, is it possible to think of a future anarchism?*

**Miguel Amorós:** These incidents are of course set-ups whose goal is to fabricate a public enemy that will make it possible to justify the passage of

regressive laws like the gag law, police brutality and law and order policies. Most of these set-ups were conceived in or near the building which houses the Department of the Interior of the Generalitat in Sabadell. The post-Franco parliamentary regime had to eliminate the libertarian features of the autonomous workers movement that emerged in the last years of the dictatorship, which had led to the return of a living corpse, the CNT, which many people clung to as a last resort of anti-authoritarianism. This anarchist road was historically superseded, but it did not succumb solely due to its own contradictions but also because of a policy of industrial restructuring that was very effectively administered by the PSOE, which turned the factory-based working class into a museum exhibit. Anarchism as a complete ideology, a cookbook and a storehouse of clichés, has no future. Anarchism is best understood as an aspiration to a full life, one that is fraternal and communitarian, without institutions that escape the control of the collectivity, where the connections between persons are direct and egalitarian, not mediated by things. To the extent that social struggles are oriented towards these goals and use means that do not contradict them, then anarchism has a future.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *When you first became involved with anarchism, the struggle against Franco was already underway and there was quite a lot of student unrest, which you discuss in your book, 1968. El año sublime de la acracia [1968: The Sublime Year of Acracy]. Since democratization, many people have draped themselves in an alleged anti-Franco past as if it was an academic degree to be listed on their resumes. How much of that struggle was myth and mystification?*

**Miguel Amorós:** 1968 was my first year of college, not when I became an anarchist, at a time when I rejected all authority and no program of demands satisfied me, either. I felt a kind of existential boiling rage against the whole status quo, similar to what other people felt. It was a state of mind that was seizing the youth of the planet and which was bearing fruit in revolts of another kind. Our revolt had the virtue of nipping in the bud the first internal attempts at democratization carried out by the Franco regime, thus forcing it to show its true face with the state of emergency of 1969. These attempts only came to fruition with the death of the dictator, since everyone knows that the apparatus of the dictatorship and the socialist-communist opposition agreed on a Transition to parliamentarism that was stage-managed from the highest levels of power, and sealed with a pact of silence and an amnesty that exonerated the criminals of Franco's regime. The immense majority of the new leaders of the "left" came from either dissident factions within the Franco regime, or from the last-minute opposition. Practically all of them had to improvise an imaginary resume, since almost none of them could truthfully claim that their political

activity extended to the period before 1975. The so-called “democracy”, which is no more of a democracy than Podemos, was not forged in the crucible of the streets, but in the halls of power.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *After you were released from prison you went into exile in France — what year was that? — and there you made contact with the situationists. What was known about the situationists at the time in Spain and how could you obtain their works when you lived on the Peninsula?*

**Miguel Amorós:** I secretly crossed the border to freedom, with the help of my brother and a friend, and I took refuge in Paris. That was in April or May of 1975. For several years before that date, the theoretical *impasse* of classical anarchism, as well as the inconsistent and capitulatory conduct of the leaders of the CNT during the war, who renounced everything “except victory”, led me towards the situationist critique, a modern and coherent view of the class struggle, methodologically Marxist-Hegelian, but which distilled what was essential from anarchism and from the artistic vanguards, that is, the liberation of desire and the subversion of everyday life. The Situationist International dissolved in 1972, so it was impossible for me to make contact with it. I did, however, meet Jaime Semprun, who had ephemeral relations with Eduardo Rothe and Guy Debord in connection with the Portuguese “Carnation” Revolution.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *A fascinating and enigmatic personality: in Paris you knew Guy Debord personally and you worked with him. What was he like when the going got tough? Did he coherently exhibit the intransigence that his analysis reflected with respect to reality? I mean, just how “authentic” was he, and to what degree did he scorn the temptations of the system he fought against?*

**Miguel Amorós:** I never knew Debord personally; I only exchanged some letters with him in 1981 when I was participating in his campaign on behalf of the liberation of the anarchist prisoners. Then I maintained relations with him for a couple of years through the mediation of third parties (Jaime Semprun and Christian Sebastiani). Although it might seem hard to believe, he was easy to deal with. Problems arose with differences of opinion. His conversation was very one-track; rather than engaging in a dialogue, he engaged in a monologue. When it came to women he was terrible. He allowed himself to be swept away by momentary impressions, by details, by unexpected separations: One might feel that one was the *crème de l'élite révolutionnaire* and the next minute one might be treated like a noxious reactionary. He was the most authentic and most lucid person of his time, the most artistic of the revolutionaries and the most revolutionary of the artists. He never made the slightest concession to the cultural or political circles that he profoundly despised. He was undoubtedly

someone special, generous, impassioned, sometimes unjust; a strong, unique personality, a genius who always walked on the wild side, a really free being who of his own free will broke the cup of life when it had been drained to the dregs.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *I have always thought that the “rebellious” potential of icons like Marlon Brando in “The Wild One”, or the pre-RCA Elvis, and this even goes for the Counterculture as a whole, amounts to nothing compared with the subversive charisma of Debord. Was Debord’s revolution the only genuine “spiritual” revolution of the 50s and 60s?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Debord was never an icon of anything, he was always engaged in a continuous war against the society of the spectacle, he was permanently ensconced in negativity. Even now it is no easy matter to recuperate him as a spectacular image of lucidity, and the merchants of culture who are trying to do so are only mutilating Debord’s radicality and aestheticizing him, without managing to turn out a credible figure. Debord turned revolution into an art and he did the same thing with his life. He was someone who led the way in the vanguard of his time, but he did not embody that vanguard as a whole. His contribution was decisive, but it was not the only one. We need only think of André Breton, Daniel Guérin, Simone Weil, Lewis Mumford, Siegfried Krakauer, Murray Bookchin, Herbert Marcuse, Gunther Anders, Dwight MacDonald, Jaime Semprun, Agustín García Calvo, and others.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *From exile you saw the consolidation in Spain of the construct of the Transition, a farce that you had already exposed, with Jaime Semprun, in 1976 with “The Manuscript Found in Vitoria”. Did you ever discuss this topic with Debord?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Before the “Manuscript”, we published “The Spanish Campaign of the European Revolution”, in which we discussed the workers struggles in the assemblies and pointed to the possibility that they might develop into a coordinated system of proletarian councils. The Transition can be interpreted as an attempt to abort this process that threatened to get out of control; the Transition was half opposition, with the trade unionists in the forefront, and half dictatorship, whose public face was the police. At the time, Debord had a falling out with Jaime and he prevented the French publisher, Champ Libre, from publishing the “Manuscript”, which, as it turned out, was all for the best, because the pamphlet was published in Spanish and distributed in Spain.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *While the constitutional monarchy was being established here, the PSOE under González was created with the stroke of a pen and we were reminded of that famous saying of Lampedusa concerning this change in which*

*nothing changed, you persevered in situationist praxis by collaborating with the journal of critical thought known as the Encyclopédie des Nuisances, which was in some ways an heir of the Situationist International. What can you tell us, objectively, about this journey?*

**Miguel Amorós:** You are talking about two different periods. When I returned from exile I got involved with a few working class friends in activity in favor of “Proletarian Autonomy and Social Revolution”, a very workerist, libertarian councilist project, halfway between the ICO and the SI (Informations Correspondance Ouvrières and the Situationist International). The defeat of the strike wave led by the assembly movement was made possible by the employers’ insistent support for the legalized trade unions, the activities of the parties, and the repression unleashed by the authorities, which then commenced their strategy of tension by infiltrating the extremist organizations to foment inexplicable attacks like the one at La Scala. The Moncloa Accords put an end to the revolutionary class struggle in the Spanish State. In France, a strong anti-nuclear movement arose that could have become radicalized in contact with the movements of resistance to industrial restructuring, and, on another level, in contact with the radical sectors of the Polish (Solidarnosc) and the Russian (SMOT) workers movements. There is a curious song by the Angelic Upstarts about this. That was the era of the magazine, *L’Assommoir*, the book, *The Nuclearization of the World*, which I translated into Spanish, and the third pamphlet of Los Incontrolados. The demands of the anti-nuclear movement would not go beyond a moratorium on the construction of nuclear reactors, and this created an opportunity for the green parties. The environmentalists immediately got involved in politics in order to work on behalf of a green capitalism and to undermine the protest movements, and that is what they are still doing. The *Encyclopédie*, formed in 1984, was an attempt to come to grips with this reality and to conduct a critical analysis of the social conflict of the 1960s. We had a feeling that the work that awaited us would be comparable to the work of the SI, with respect to its importance.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Despite the enmity, based on his congenital inferiority complex, that Alfonso Guerra felt for him, Jorge Semprún, the father of Jaime Semprún, the driving force behind the Encyclopédie des Nuisances, was named Minister of Culture by Felipe. How did this news affect the journal?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It didn’t really matter. It had been fifteen years since Jaime had broken with his father, whom he considered to be a bourgeoisified intellectual who had spent many years as an accomplice of the Stalinists. The news did however give rise to some jokes. Jorge Semprún was the paradigm of

the organic intellectual, egolatrous and chameleon-like, a seller of himself and a model for social climbers.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *What circumstances were responsible for your return to Spain — and in what year — and what was your impression when you arrived and saw how Iberian democracy was developing on the ground...*

**Miguel Amorós:** In late 1976 I got a passport from the embassy and the first thing I did was to take a trip through England, just when the punk scene was getting underway. In April of 1977 I returned to the Peninsula and I made arrangements to print “The Manuscript Found in Vitoria”. There was a lot going on in Barcelona, but it was mostly dominated by frivolity and fashionable radical chic. The confusion increased and the most diametrically opposed camps intermingled: some apathetic passerby might lie down to take a nap in the Parque Güell and wake up as a nationalist in the middle of an Estatut d’Autonomía demonstration. The proletarian offensive was broken on March 3, 1976 in Vitoria/Gasteiz, but the workers movement still enraged Franco’s heirs, whether of the right or the left. With a handful of associates I plunged into a wandering itinerary from one hot-spot of struggle to another. I especially recall the strikes of the ceramics industry workers in Castellón and the shoe industry workers in Alicante.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Since then your activity in the critical sphere has been constant — could you also tell me about your activity as it was related to earning a living, your career as a teacher — and you have constructed your own platform, the publishing house/journal Argelaga, which defines itself as “anti-developmental and libertarian” and which to some degree constitutes a new version of the Encyclopédie. As a publisher, what degree of real, more or less proven interest, do you believe exists at this time in Spain with respect to critical thought and the unmasking of that which determines our everyday lives?*

**Miguel Amorós:** I signed up with the assembly of unemployed teachers and the only position that I managed to get was as an elementary school teacher. I began the course in 1979-80 and I obtained a stable job that allowed me to avoid dreading each day as a struggle to survive. The prospect for radical change in Spain had evaporated. Tejero’s coup terrified the personnel of the State and that hybrid of Franco’s Spain and parliamentarism that they called “democracy” was imposed as the lesser of two evils. Meanwhile, the Berlin Wall fell. In France, a radical anti-nuclear movement re-emerged after the accident at Chernobyl in 1987 and the “Irradiated People of the World, Unite!” Committee, whose positions were close to our own, was formed. During the same period, there were protests against large-scale, pointless projects like building highways and



the high speed train. In the *Encyclopédie* we imagined that we were at the threshold of a new cycle of struggles, which we defined as anti-industrial struggles. We put our support behind these struggles and we formed, with some other people, an Alliance against All Harmful Phenomena [*Nuisances*]. Later, I think it was in 1993, at the suggestion of Semprun, the Éditions de l'Encyclopédie des Nuisances was established, in which I played a very minor role. At that time I was working on a historical review of anarchism during the revolutionary civil war. My first book was about The Friends of Durruti Group, founded by Jaime Balius; my second book was on the Iron Column; my third was devoted to the Andalusian anarchist, Francisco Maroto; my fourth book was on Durruti during the civil war. *Argelaga* belongs to a later stage; that was a project that was conceived in 2013 in close cooperation with Joan B. that followed in the footsteps of interesting antecedents like the *Boletín de Los Amigos de Ludd* [Bulletin of the Friends of Ludd], publishers like Muturreko, Etcétera, the *Raíces* [Roots] journal or the old magazine *Ekintza Zuzena*. These are not good times for critique, now that we have a reformist middle class that is trying to resolve the crisis with an “assault” on legislative seats. Everything that comes from political realism is viewed with jaundiced eyes, but that is how it is.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *One of the titles listed in Argelaga's catalogue is your book, Rock para principiantes [Rock for Beginners] (2014), a highly condensed but instructive synthesis of the development and consumerist assimilation of this culture. Why did you write that book...*

**Miguel Amorós:** It started with a conversation in a bar with a friend of mine from Alcoy who was involved with an online journal called MISC. I was surprised by the fact that the ignorance of the new generations involves more than just forgetting the historical memory of revolutions and has embraced one of the most typical manifestations of the youth of the sixties. No one remembered anything from before the era of punk. What poverty!

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *What was your relation to rock? I suppose that because you grew up in Valencia, one of the most prolific provinces for the Spanish pop music of the sixties, this would be a determinant factor...*

**Miguel Amorós:** When I was a little kid I listened to rock and to every kind of music that was played on the radio. I even learned to sing in the chorus of my school. The small cities and villages preserved some vitality and during the sixties bands were formed in even the most remote places that imitated the Beatles, the Shadows, Presley, the Teen Tops, etc., and performed versions of the most popular pop and soul songs. I liked rock, but I was not gifted with interpretive talent. I wasn't into the singer-songwriter genre, either. I liked Dylan but I

despised what Raimon, Ovidi, Pi de la Serra and Lluís Llach were doing; it sounded like an opportunist copy, hollow, like pseudo-transcendent poetry. Nothing comparable to “The Times They Are A-Changin’”. They were the musical wing of the opposition that made a deal with *franquismo* to create the disgusting partitocratic regime we have now. Just look at how the front row of seats at one of Raimon’s latest concerts is full of Ministers, political bigwigs and old trade unionists who sold out. I will stick with Nadine’s coffee-colored Cadillac, Chuck Berry’s first single. [His first single after his release from prison — translator’s note] That was less pretentious and more authentic.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *In Rock for Beginners you conclude that no subsequent musical style “has broken out of its particular ghetto, because none of them could express the universal hopes of freedom and self-realization like the rock of that era; they taught no lessons that could be forgotten, nor did they challenge the established order very effectively, nor did they fan the flames of protest for very long”. You also say that pop music “therefore became the bearer of truth, which, according to Hegel, is also beauty, and is spontaneously manifested, subjective and incomplete, appealing to the senses — or ‘good vibrations’ — instead of reason, the spirit of the modern social revolution”. I partly agree with both of these opinions, but I get the feeling that they harbor a certain idealization that I suppose has something to do with the fact that you were there, when you were young, so that there might be an element of nostalgia or Proustian longing for days gone by.*

**Miguel Amorós:** I, too, have been burned, like Nerval, by the rays of “the black sun of melancholy”. Nostalgia, more or less. In the past rock was a catalyst of revolutionary energies and nostalgia tends to idealize this. We recall a time when the monotonous vulgarity of the present was not thought to be creative and original, when authenticity stole in through the cracks that the prevailing monotony could not seal. Yearning for what has been lost has not turned me into a pathetic old rocker like Miguel Ríos, but I use it as a weapon in the struggle for a different kind of future than the one that our leaders want to impose on us.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Your most recent book is Filosofía en el tocador [Philosophy in the Boudoir] (2016), a collection of transcripts of talks, texts and introductions that contains, if not all, at least a good share of the main themes of your discourse. Beginning with the truth. “In a world dominated by capitalist irrationality, truth is only a moment of the false. Its revelation no longer changes anything”. How have we descended into this new dark age, which is so blindingly illuminated?*

**Miguel Amorós:** That was a paraphrase of one of the theses from Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, and Debord's thesis was a *détournement* of a quotation from Hegel. The products of social activity, whether they are commodities or institutions, escape from the control of the producers, and confront them as separate powers. Human relations are no longer direct and have become mediated by things or images, they have become dehumanized. This is called alienation. Being is transposed outside of the self. Reality is concealed by appearance. And truth is concealed by falsehood. How did we reach this point? At first, gradually, thanks to a process of colonization of the world by the commodity and a gradual replacement of society by the State. Then, during the time of the spectacle, with the unification of Capital and the State, all at once.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Speaking of fascism, you point out that under such a regime, "thought or the search for the truth is not valued, because the social order is exclusively based on the bald-faced lie". At this very moment in Spain, and in many other places, the same thing is happening...*

**Miguel Amorós:** Postmodernism, which is the philosophical reaction in late capitalism, has relativized the truth, putting it on the same level with the lie. It was an attempt to abolish the points of reference on the basis of which objective statements could be made. In politics this is the job of the spectacle, or as they used to say, propaganda. Power has at its disposal a media apparatus of disinformation and non-communication thanks to which it transmits its messages and orders, and compliance is monitored by way of a sophisticated mechanism of control. What we have is a peaceful conditioning of the population that is politely leading us to a police state. The particratic regime is very similar to the Nazi regime with respect to the way it functions, except that it is based on persuasion and does not resort to violence except in extreme cases.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *The neutralization of truth seems to be a direct consequence of the neutralization of History, another one of your concerns. Somewhere you say that "History is tragic, because contradictions are incubated and develop within it that can only be resolved in violent struggle ... the secret will be revealed only to the spectators of the macabre last act." Is violence the only possible way to retrieve History from those who write it? Is knowing the secret worth so much trouble?*

**Miguel Amorós:** That quotation pertains to one of the main conclusions of Hegel's philosophy of history. George Orwell, in his book *1984*, exposed the totalitarian principle that "ignorance is strength". The erasure of memory is a weapon to control the past used by those who control the present. And, once again returning to *1984*, "those who control the present control the future".

Obviously, the controllers will not abdicate of their own free will, but will have to be evicted. Is it worth the trouble? I would answer that with another question: is it worth the trouble to live in ignorance? The truth will make you free, as the New Testament says. When we allow ourselves to be administered by the State and represented by the parties we are permitted to live in a kingdom of forgetting where the *aurea mediocritas* [golden mean] is the final goal, although I am afraid that, the way things are going, not even this goal is within the reach of many people. The truth will make us free, but the truth alone will not make us happy.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *History is above all else Memory, you say, but there is nonetheless the paradox of Historical Memory, that invention of Pierre Nora, by means of which the past could also be imagined. Was Hassan-i Sabbah therefore correct when he said that “nothing is true and everything is permitted”?*

**Miguel Amorós:** That saying does not come from Hassan i-Sabbah but from a German orientalist from the early 19th century, Hammer Purgstall, who abusively reduced the entire Ismaelite doctrine to that principle for the purpose of exposing the disastrous influence of secret societies on weak governments. The French Revolution had such a profound impact on conservative thought that it caused the proponents of the latter to believe in a universal and perpetual conspiracy that started with the medieval heretics, and, passing through the Templars and the Jesuits, found a home among the Masonic lodges, the alleged culprits behind the revolution. *Si non e vero, e ben trovato!* [“Even if it is not true, it is well conceived” — translator’s note] The conspiracies of nihilist fanatics are nonetheless very much a contemporary phenomenon when it comes to power’s tactics of disinformation, by means of which power manufactures the terrorist image of its enemies, whether anarchists or Islamic fundamentalists.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *In the text, Genealogía del pensamiento débil [Genealogy of Weak Thought], you speak of a “submissive thought that serves as the watchdog over subversive appearances” and of “consumers of ideology who want the prestige of revolt and the comfort of order at the same time”. It would appear that this can be applied to 15M, to podemismo and to the whole new political (re)generation that seems to amount to a project to sell the youth to their leaders, like rock.*

**Miguel Amorós:** Weak thought, post-structuralism and deconstructionism — *French Theory* — arose as a reaction against May ’68. Its goal was to destroy revolutionary thought by presenting it as the bearer of totalitarianism. The technophile generation of 15M was weaned on its postulates, its topics, and its pseudo-radicalism. It is not a generation that advocates the dismantling of capitalism and the dissolution of the State, that builds barricades and turns its back on institutions, but very much the contrary. It is a generation of the

prematurely aged, which criminalizes those who defend themselves from the police, and lays claim to the streets in order to transform them into high-tech discotheques, rehabilitating the old fetishes with cosmic glitter.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Podemos, which you have referred to as “the remake of the United Left [Izquierda Unida]”, is the product of the so-called civil society movement, which you have characterized as an “assault on the easy chairs” and concerning which you are very critical: “the presence of politicians of a new kind who hold the balance of power alongside other, more well-known politicians, is a factor of stability for the particratic caste and gives it a shot of legitimacy”.*

**Miguel Amorós:** The communists have always been the vanguard of the counterrevolution. If, forty years ago, with a strong workers movement, this vanguard took the form of a workers party, now, without any prospects of revolution on the horizon, this same vanguard acquires the lineaments of a renovated social democracy. These days, the seizure of power is not based on channeling the violence unleashed by the class struggle, but on the frustration of the members of the bourgeoisified middle class, who think of themselves as the “citizenry”. The “assault on the institutions” is nothing but the electoral exploitation of the disillusionment of “civil society”. You only need to take a look at the institutional conduct of Podemos and its partners to realize that they have not regenerated anything, but are reaffirming everything just as it is.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *Postmodernism is another one of your bêtes noires. You define it as reactionary, as expressing the predominance of individual interests, the immediate satisfaction of false needs, unconsciousness, ignorance, manipulated desires and a spirit that is content with increasingly less convincing substitutes. Have people like Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Baudrillard been that pernicious?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The situationists coined the term, “recuperation”, to refer to the operation of devitalization and pillage of critical thought by way of an incoherent, confusionist, and frankly superficial discourse, which could only serve the purposes of the established order. The recuperators of the past used the university as their base of operations, disseminating a flood of frivolous and pretentious literature that presently serves as a “toolbox” for our contemporary recuperators, who are much more numerous than their predecessors. The impostors that you mention were no worse than their admiring readers: they were just doing their jobs.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *One of the pillars of submissive thought, you say, is “the theoretical annihilation of the subject of consciousness”. You give the impression that, confronted by this assault, one must be on high alert twenty-four hours a day.*

*You cannot even sleep, for by doing so you run the risk of ending up like the protagonists in “The Invasion of the Body Snatchers”. Living like that is so stifling...*

**Miguel Amorós:** As the English say, *Don't panic*. My statement refers to the efforts of the ideologues of submission to prevent the formation of a conscious collective — we could call it a historical force, or a class. Not letting yourself get dragged around by your nose is something that does not demand any special lucidity, nor does it generate an anxiety that could deprive us of sleep. When we wake up we will still be the same people.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *In your opinion, technology has been a major ally for turbo-capitalism in its quest to proletarianize the world and to disseminate that postmodern mentality based on “narcissism, existential emptiness, frivolity, consumerism, the absence of any serious commitment, fear, loneliness, emotional problems and problems with relationships, vapid gregariousness, the worship of success, [and] political ‘realism’”. Whenever I take the subway and I see everyone absorbed in their smart phones, I think of the zombie movies. Will this get worse?*

**Miguel Amorós:** There is a law that is inherent to our contemporary way of life that can be expressed as follows: “Everything that can get worse, will get worse.” Technology has always been the great ally of Capital, *dixit* Marx, since every technological innovation has increased the yield of the means of production and abolished jobs. It has not ceased to do so, but has allowed everyday life to enter the domain of the economy. The most insignificant gesture of private life can be source of profit if it is correctly mechanized and capitalized. Technology allows the logic of the market to penetrate into everyday life in ways that would have been unimaginable only a few years ago. The same goes for levels of surveillance. The body snatchers that you mentioned are now a technical possibility thanks to nanotechnology.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *One of your more striking premises is that the suppression of the working class, or, more precisely, of its consciousness, was the greatest counterrevolutionary achievement of capitalism. It is in fact remarkable to observe how, in documentaries about the 1970s, at the threshold of the transitional con game, one can see working class people who are much more well-informed ideologically, with articulate and educated opinions. Now, this slave class is more concerned with sales at Primark and its “discourse” has become illiterate...*

**Miguel Amorós:** The Transition had an economic dimension. National capitalism was dissolved into larger market structures until everything was globalized. The tertiarization of the economy overwhelmingly diminished the role of labor in the productive sector and led to a corresponding increase of labor in the service sector. This shift of wage labor from one sector to another

entailed the effects of massification, social uprooting and anomie in the proletariat. The relative economic prosperity that was brought by pensions, unlimited credit and civil service jobs submerged the wage earning masses in conformism and locked them up within private life, which allowed others to pursue politics as a well-remunerated job, with revolving doors that guaranteed that they would never lose their source of income.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *In fact, the middle class has also been abolished, it has been turned into a wage earning class, “a docile being ready to sacrifice its convictions and its dignity for the comfort of the automobile, family life, social security and a pension. This fear of losing its status on the market and this lack of self-respect prepared it for every renunciation”. Is this the worst kind of fear?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The acquisitive level of the middle class has been partially reduced, but its mentality is still intact. Its fear, however, has grown exponentially, and the task of every good government consists in the correct management of this fear. Saint-Just said in one of his speeches that “all other arts have produced masterpieces, but the art of government has only produced monsters”. We are already familiar with some of these monsters, called politicians, but we do not pay as much attention to the masses of slaves, who, to preserve their lives as stockyard cattle, are ready to bow down before anyone who instills them with a need for this condition and to stigmatize all those who are excluded from this vast paradise.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *You emphasize the fact that the “crisis” that has generated this fear and this uncertainty has not been translated into a demand for drastic changes, as common sense might perhaps lead one to expect: “In the masses affected by this trend, a sceptical, possibilist attitude predominates, since festive and cretinous submission is inevitable in societies suffering from anomie. Phenomena such as precarious jobs, pauperization and exclusion have not led to significant social conflicts, unlike what had happened only a few decades before.” Anomie now seems just as coterminous with our existence as the fact that human nature can descend yet further into degradation...*

**Miguel Amorós:** In mass society, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, individuals are incapable of normal relations with each other. So we have the paradox that crowds engender isolation, and isolation engenders fear and neuroses. A society of solitary individuals does not admit any norms of conduct that are valid for all, since it is a disordered mass of persons without any possibility of communicating directly and normally with each other. The norms must be imposed from the outside, from the state apparatus, by way of mechanisms of surveillance and police coercion.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *A State like our contemporary State, you pointed out, paraphrasing Debord, which is contrary to reason, to life and to so many other things, “is condemned to aberration and collapse”. No one would say such a thing today, seeing as this State perpetuates itself even as its nature is becoming more obvious, as is now happening in Spain. What do you think about these opinion polls that indicate so much support at the voting booth for the PP and the PSOE? I am asking you this because you say that “the economy and kickbacks do not work without order, and the partiocracy, if it is not exactly order, is a disorder that functions as much to the benefit of the economy as to that of profits themselves. It is established disorder”. By the way, do you vote?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The modern State is a machine resting on a foundation of sand that any crisis can destroy. In 1936, the republican State collapsed overnight despite the fact that the fascist revolt was not as successful as was anticipated. The coup attempt of 23F kept the State in a state of suspense of days, which is how long it took to convince the military high command and the royal house. Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland have been on the verge of collapse because of such futile matters as unpaid state debts, real estate bubbles or banking black holes. It is precisely the fragility of the State that pushes the submissive and alienated masses into the arms of the traditional parties, because they are afraid that the remedies proposed by the new parties would affect their personal routines and threaten that lifestyle that has cost them so many unsatisfied desires and so much repressed will. Better an evil you know than.... As for me, as the other Marx, Groucho, said, I would never agree to join a club of voters that would admit me as a member, which is why I have never voted.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *You say that indiscriminate terrorism plays a fundamental role for the survival of our contemporary political and economic classes, providing an alibi for introducing a police state. What is obvious to you, is only a paranoid conspiracy to others. In any event, however, the rise of Islamic terrorism, and the Islamic penetration into Europe, are matters that give us a lot of food for thought in this sense. The refugee “crisis”, for example: is it part of some plan?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Joaquín Maurín, the founder of the POUM, said with respect to the “white” terrorism that afflicted Barcelona between 1916 and 1924: “It is an undeniable historical phenomenon that a class in power, when it feels its enemy undermining the foundations of its power, resorts to terrorism, whose forms vary according to circumstances.” Today we know all about the “strategy of tension” in Italy during the seventies, to which the panic-stricken Italian ruling class resorted to terrorism to paralyze any inclinations the working class population may have had to oppose the state by means other than the



incorporation of the Italian Stalinists into the government. A similar strategy, but on a lesser scale, was applied in Spain between 1976 and 1981. The attacks and kidnappings staged by FRAP and GRAPO, the extreme right and parallel units of the police forces, were indications of an internal struggle between the insiders from the Franco regime who favored modernization and those who were more reluctant to dismantle the police-trade union apparatus of the dictatorship. Jihadist terrorism, on the other hand, was a direct consequence of the war that the capitalist countries are waging in the Middle East and elsewhere for control over major reserves of oil and gas. The abundance of failed States has given rise to the emergence of an extremist party that has no qualms about making the population of the West feel the deadly effects of the war in the Middle East. What is ironic about this development is the fact that this party, when it was first formed, was financed, armed and trained by the capitalist States and their Islamic allies. The reactions to these developments on the part of the middle classes in northern and southern Europe have been quite different. While the southern Europeans interpret the crisis and the war as domestic or foreign political problems, the northern Europeans see them as security and border problems. While the middle class of the Mediterranean countries likes to express a humanitarianism that costs it nothing, in the rest of Europe that same class contemplates the immigrants and refugees as a foreign body that is very costly and that does not conform to its idiosyncrasies, which is why there is so much support for a reactionary wave of ethnic identity movements and nationalism is returning in its most proto-fascist forms.

**Jaime Gonzalo:** *You express some very alarming, if not alarmist, reflections, with respect to Progress, that incurable cancer: you have expressed the idea that there is no future — which is to say that the Sex Pistols were right — and that justice and freedom are increasingly less concrete, that there are no beings with independent judgment but only people who are unreflectively absorbed in their toys, that the only progress is that of leaders who make progress thanks to the progress of ignorance, submission and control. “If history follows the course laid out by progressivist hubris, the endpoint will be desolation.” Is our outlook so bleak?*

**Miguel Amorós:** John Lydon recounts in his autobiography that the Pistols sang “no future” precisely because they insisted that there should be one. Back then, the United Kingdom was suffering the consequences of a prolonged economic recession that was overcome with brutal austerity measures during the Thatcher era and a dash of patriotism (the Malvinas War). It was not a very lucid form of pessimism because it was still devoted to progress, but it served as a rallying cry for the first frustrated generation of recent history. It was more or less around that time that the first issue of the *Encyclopédie des Nuisances* questioned

the idea of progress. Progress, understood as economic and technological growth, has its negative side. This train has brought us wars, inequalities, corruption, disease, pollution... Developmentalism depletes resources, destroys cultures, concentrates the population in insufferable conurbations, creates pockets of marginalized people, ruins nature, tortures the climate and throws the planet out of balance. Facing this kind of panorama you cannot be an optimist. The evils brought to us by the realization of the bourgeois concept of progress can be cured by getting rid of it, which implies a social reorganization that is incompatible with private profit and separate representation.

April 2016

A slightly abridged version of this interview, in the original Spanish, was published in [Ruta 66](#), July 2016.

Translated from an unabridged transcript provided by Miguel Amorós.

Source: [LibCom.org](#)

Original text:

**“La nostalgia por el rock puede ser un arma de lucha”**

## The Social Revolution and Civil War in Spain: A Brief Synopsis

The unprecedented world crisis of the 1930s exacerbated the class struggle in various European countries and gave rise to revolutionary situations that led their ruling classes, disenchanted with the parliamentary system, to opt for dictatorship and fascism.

A series of unsuccessful revolutionary uprisings took place in Spain during the Republican period. The working class, seeking to obtain civil rights and to secure the release of its imprisoned comrades, decided to support, actively or passively, the weakened liberal sector of the bourgeoisie, knowing that the majority of the ruling class would never accept an electoral victory that benefited the proletarian organizations. The victory of the Popular Front was expected to lead to a *coup d'état* to establish a fascist dictatorship; CNT and anarchist speakers were constantly warning that after the election the choice would have to be made between fascism and revolution.

It was in this psychological context that the military uprising, based in Africa, took place, which relied at first on the advantage of the initial passivity of the government, which absolutely refused to distribute arms to the people, and which did nothing to take advantage of its naval superiority to block the transport of the African troops who occupied Western Andalusia and Estremadura and committed horrible massacres. The workers replied with general strikes and barricades, and wherever they had armed defense groups, they attacked the barracks and formed militia columns to liberate the towns and cities that had fallen into the hands of the rebels.

In the Loyalist zone, the correlation of forces was profoundly altered. Local governments were replaced by Committees that assumed responsibility for regulating the affairs of everyday life. Although the forces of Public Order were not dissolved, their functions were transferred into the hands of improvised committees, "mobile brigades" and patrols. All prisoners were released from the jails and prisons, including common criminals, and the prisons began to fill up with priests, right wing elements and fascists. Furthermore, each organization had its own detention centers. Outside of the organizations, "uncontrolled" groups emerged behind the lines that were devoted to robbery, extortion and

murder, and these groups were rapidly exterminated. The trade unions took over public and religious buildings, while the monasteries and convents, bull-fighting arenas and barracks were used as recruitment centers and storage depots for clothing, food and equipment for the militia columns that were being sent to liberate the zones that had been seized by the rebels. Automobiles were requisitioned for military purposes, and the property of those persons who had fled or were in hiding, and the printing presses that printed conservative and right wing newspapers, were also confiscated.

A deep rooted system of workers control was established in the factories for the purpose of preparing for their expropriation, rural agricultural tracts were collectivized and socialization seemed to be imminent. Speculation and food shortages were prevented by means of market controls. And the hotels, bars and restaurants, hospitals, barber shops, theaters, etc., were also collectivized.... People's dining halls were created, schools were formed, and the trolleys were emblazoned with the colors and slogans of the proletariat. On the airwaves, the voices of the workers delegates were broadcast far and wide. Meetings and conferences where the political, social and military situation was explained, and the pertinent directives were issued, were attended by vast multitudes. On the streets, one saw only working class attire (overalls, bandanas and militiamen's forage caps). The standard gesture of greeting was the raised fist.

The militia columns, while they were on leave, assisted the peasants in their work in the fields, helped organize committees, socialized goods and services, and proclaimed libertarian communism in the liberated areas.

The sudden changes that erupted in society in July and August clearly marked the beginning of a profound social revolution that did not come to a halt after merely transforming external political appearances. Recent events testified to the fact that the republican legal framework was incapable of resolving even the smallest problems that arose, much less of addressing and controlling the popular maelstrom unleashed by the fascist military revolt.

Despite the fact that, in practice, power was in the hands of the workers organizations, the republican institutions were not dismantled. The bourgeois State still retained its body, even if it had been deprived of its vital force. All the elements of the counterrevolution—policemen, Civil and Assault Guards, judges, bankers, professional intellectuals, conservative journalists, etc.—who, for one reason or another, had remained loyal to the Republic, were waiting for the revolutionary wave to subside so they could recover their former positions and then, organized in the left-wing parties and trade union organizations, confront the revolution.

Because the PCE [the Communist Party] opposed the revolutionary course taken by the working class and openly displayed its determination to strictly adhere to the pre-July 19 republican framework, especially with regard to the question of private property, it became the safe haven of all the enemies of the social revolution.



Enough "experiments" and "projects", first win the war!

The proletarian offensive stalled on the outskirts of the major cities of Aragon and in the Sierra de Guadarrama, and it was defeated in Granada, Seville and Cordoba. Mallorca, Galicia, Old Castille, Vitoria and Pamplona fell into the hands of the rebels. The landings of African troops in Cadiz opened up the road to Madrid, where all the rebel forces were focused. There, the militiamen had to face not just simple Civil Guards and fascist fanatics, but regular army soldiers and shock troops like the legionnaires and Moroccan units, which were better equipped and supplied than the other rebel units. The Spanish capital therefore absorbed almost all the available military hardware and supplies of the Republic, paralyzing all the other fronts.

It was obviously necessary to put an end to the phantom existence of the State and to form a proletarian army on the basis of the militia columns — the people armed — an army that would be capable of defeating the rebels in battle, consolidating the proletarian conquests, and driving the revolutionary process forward. The only force that had resolved to proceed in this direction was the CNT, and even in the CNT this position was not unanimously supported, as a large number of its representatives were in favor of collaborating with the other political forces, whether bourgeois or proletarian, in a republican government that would be the legitimate heir of bourgeois legality. The CNT had just reincorporated within its ranks the reformist sector of the Confederation at the Zaragoza Congress (the *treintistas*), but it was the responsible committees that made this decision, without the support of a real majority of the membership.

The libertarian leaders who were committed to collaboration performed a precarious balancing act with regard to their rank and file base by upholding and coordinating its conquests while simultaneously explicitly renouncing the struggle for libertarian communism, which was the ostensible goal of the confederal organization, and the “go for broke” strategy, that is, the seizure of power. This difficult position led them to participate in the inter-classist regional governments that were created to assume responsibility for the functions of the institutions that the uprising had rendered obsolete, and they engaged in many initiatives whose goal was to achieve practical unity with the UGT and the loyalist parties. The fascist victories led to the socialist Largo Caballero’s appointment as Prime Minister, and although Caballero did not yield to the pressure of the CNT to form a government council composed exclusively of trade union delegates, he did offer them four Ministerial portfolios instead. The entry of the CNT in the Government served as a fig leaf to cover its transfer to Valencia.

In the meantime, the war had taken on international dimensions. The great powers, afraid that the revolution might spill over into their territories, signed a Non-Intervention Pact that forbade its signatories from engaging in the slightest effort to help the Spanish Republic. The military superiority of the rebels, who relied on the support of Portugal, Italy and Germany, left no other option than to depend on the Soviet Union, the only world power that was willing to help the republican side.

The hopes placed in the Soviet Union gave a major boost to the fortunes of the PCE, which increased its proportional representation in government institutions far beyond the magnitude of its real membership. It immediately became the spokesman for all the parties that had been harmed by the revolution. At first, it supported Largo Caballero's initiatives to reinforce the State apparatus and to create a "people's" Army with a centralized command structure. The decrees mandating the restoration of the municipal governments, the disarmament of the rearguard and the militarization of the militias, implied the rehabilitation of Government power and the end of the power vacuum that had allowed the revolution to thrive. The creation or expansion of various police forces and the formation of mixed brigades were intended to contain and undermine the revolutionary process both behind the lines and at the front. The new civil governors, supported at all times by the communists, clashed with the autonomy of the committees, the collectives and the militias. Bloody incidents took place in Guadix and Valencia.

The libertarian leaders proved to be fervent advocates of militarization, the restoration of the authority of the municipal government bodies and the disarmament of the rearguard, as well as participation in government institutions. The editorial committee of *Solidaridad Obrera* was replaced by another group of editors who were more amenable to promoting the official, statist and pro-Soviet political line. It did not take long for the newspaper to proclaim that the civil war was not a class war, but a "war of independence against the invader", as the PCE said, and it became the champion of "unity", discipline and respect for the military brass.

Durruti was sent to Madrid at the behest of Soviet agents to reduce the power of the anarchists on the Aragon front, and he was persuaded by his comrades in the highest echelons of the CNT-FAI that if he went to Madrid he would obtain adequate supplies. A "stray bullet", or maybe one that was not so stray, killed him, but Madrid was saved. The lifting of the siege of Madrid was attributed to the International Brigades, whose ulterior purpose was to serve as a counterweight to the anarchist militias. The death of Durruti on November 20, 1936 removed an

important obstacle to militarization, allowing the invention for political purposes of the public image of a military chief ready to renounce “everything for victory”, according to an editorial published in *Solidaridad Obrera* in February 1937. With this phrase the responsible committees of the libertarian movement inaugurated the circumstantialist doctrine of support for the State and renounced their principles, tactics and goals. The fall of Malaga in early February was only an additional pretext for the further confirmation of this policy.

The Peninsular Committee of the FAI began to take measures to transform the FAI into a political party, with hierarchies, statutes, membership cards and dues, engaging in all kinds of verbal gymnastics in order not to clash with the interests of the various power centers that had formed within the new libertarian bureaucracy, and also for the purpose of marginalizing the affinity groups that were resolved to continue to operate as they had in the past. In fact, what this amounted to was an attempt to create the political superstructure for a newborn bureaucracy at the expense of an incomplete revolution, a necessary factor for the political and trade union plutocracy of the republic, the new bourgeoisie that had come to replace the old bourgeoisie. Paid positions in this bureaucracy also conferred privileges such as having access to basic goods that had disappeared from the market, the use of a private automobile, and perquisites such as opportunities to dine in luxury restaurants and elite nightclubs, and to attend banquets and theatrical shows. Fur coats, tailored suits, neckties and the kinds of hats worn by the upper classes were once again seen on the streets.

The offensive against the anarchists was being consolidated: the discovery of the Cheka of Murcia, the assassination of the members of the collectives at Torres de la Alameda, the arrest of Maroto, the suspension of the libertarian press (*Nosotros*, *Castilla Libre*, *CNT Norte*), the incidents at Vinalosa and Gandia....

As the counterrevolution advanced and the divorce between the libertarian leadership and the rank and file militants of the libertarian movement was consummated, signs of dissent and radical opposition appeared (The Friends of Durruti, the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia, the Local Federation of Groups of Barcelona, the journal *Ideas*, the bulletin *Alerta!*...). The leadership of the CNT-FAI convoked a conference of the editors of the movement's publications to impose a single political line. In July, a Political Advisory Commission was formed to control discordant views.

It is obvious that a strong reaction on the part of the international proletariat against its respective governments would have put an end to the Non-Intervention Pact and thus facilitated loyalist Spain's access to arms. The end of



dependence on the USSR for arms supplies would have curtailed the otherwise inexplicable influence of the PCE, the penetration of Russian advisors in the Army and the unbridled activity of the Stalinist secret services. It would have also rendered the capitulationist orientation of the confederal and anarchist leadership towards the State much more difficult. Without the preponderant Russian role, the doors for open dissent against that orientation would have been pushed wide open. But the solidarity actions of the international proletariat were insufficient and the revolution could not be consummated.

The Battle of Guadalajara preserved the balance of forces on the military fronts, buying just enough time for one last provocation for the purpose of removing Largo Caballero from the Government (he was opposed to communist dominance), putting an end to the excessive influence of the CNT-FAI, liquidating the achievements of the proletariat (which had already been significantly attenuated), putting the POUM behind bars and proclaiming open season on all revolutionaries. The communist plot found its most reliable allies in Catalonia, and it operated through them. The communists tested the waters with the theft of some tanks in Barcelona and the assassination of Antonio Martín in Puigcerdá, and then openly launched their attack on May 3 with the attempt to occupy the Telephone Exchange Building.

The May Days, despite the fact that the workers were victorious on the streets, marked the end of the revolution. The workers' unconditional withdrawal from the barricades at the behest of their leaders resulted in an implacable wave of repression that filled the jails and the labor camps (recently created by the Minister of Justice, García Oliver) with foreign volunteers, trade unionists, anarchists and members of the POUM. The Defense Committees were dissolved by the CNT leadership to prevent any further uprisings. At this point one can no longer speak of mistakes or myopia, but only of treason.

The counterrevolution created two powerful instruments, the Espionage and High Treason Tribunals and the Military Information Service, and fostered the emergence of a system of secret prisons (Chekas) that were completely beyond the reach of the ordinary justice system. The Government was transferred to Barcelona. Berneri's corpse was found, as was the mass grave containing the bodies of the libertarian youth of San Andrés, the CNT's radio stations were shut down, the censorship completely purged the libertarian press, and the POUM was outlawed; there was a second provocation with the assault on Los Escolapios, Andrés Nin was assassinated, the control patrols were dissolved, and the Council of Aragon was abolished and the collectives of Aragon were destroyed by communist divisions. Special tribunals tried revolutionary

workers, now branded as “*incontrolados*”: secret gravesites, the May Events, etc. The borders came under the control of the Central Government. All the collectivized enterprises and agrarian collectives would have to submit to new restrictive legislation, when they were not just returned to their former owners or directly nationalized “for strategic reasons” (as in the cases of the Transport and Communications sectors).

With the Soviets commanding the People’s Army, the anarchist brigades were used as cannon fodder and sent to the front without sufficient weaponry or ammunition, and without artillery support or air cover, and were practically annihilated (the most flagrant case was that of the 83rd Mixed Brigade, the old Iron Column). Behind the lines, active militants were imprisoned in Chekas and tortured. At the front, anarchists who refused to join the PCE were shot with impunity on the flimsiest pretexts. Large numbers of soldiers were sacrificed in pointless battles like Brunete and Belchite, diversionary actions that failed to prevent the fall of the entire Northern Zone (Vizcaya, Santander and Asturias). The committees of the CNT and the FAI, which had created Defense Sections in their organizations, were fully informed about all of these developments, but, far from publicly denouncing this situation, they restricted their activities to bitter complaints in detailed reports they sent to the Prime Minister.

The libertarian militants found themselves in the situation of having to choose between a fascist dictatorship and a republican dictatorship led by communists, and fighting fascism, no longer in defense of a revolution, but of an authoritarian bourgeois regime. Their press competed with the other tendencies in its expressions of nationalism, and the patriotic oratory of their delegates beggared belief. Demoralization inexorably swept over the masses who were fighting for the abolition of wage labor and classes.

At the end of 1937 the descent into betrayal by the leaders of the Spanish libertarian movement was complete. Not only did they wage a campaign to impose their treasonous policies on the international libertarian movement, in which well-known figures like Rüdiger, Souchy, Leval, Lapeyre, Lecoin, Rocker, etc., proved to be very useful, but they constantly pleaded for a place in Negrín’s government and ignored the repression that was decimating their rank and file membership. Their former ideology was formally and definitively abandoned at an economic plenum held in January of 1938 and in their subsequent pact with the UGT. They advocated a democratic and federal republic whose constitution was supposed to be approved by the Spanish people once the war was over. The government crisis that removed the defeatist Indalecio Prieto from power also resulted in the CNT obtaining a Ministry in the “Government of Victory”.

The *negrinismo* and pro-communism of the National Committee of the CNT were so extreme that they provoked major conflicts with the Catalanian Regional Committee and the leadership of the FAI. After the debacle of the battle of Teruel everyone except the National Committee was convinced that defeat was inevitable. A combined plenum of the three organizations of the Spanish Libertarian Movement, however, reaffirmed its support for its leading committees and expressed its support for resistance to the end, draped in the “Thirteen Points” of the Prime Minister, as opposed to the defeatism of the sector that was opposed to the anarchist bureaucracy that was hoping for another “Convention of Vergara” arranged by the United Kingdom.

CNT leaders participated in a government that executed many CNT militants during the subsequent wave of repression. Finally, the fiasco of the last great pointless battle, the Battle of the Ebro, along with the withdrawal of the International Brigades, undermined communist influence and allowed the sectors that felt that they had been mistreated — the non-*negrinista* socialists, the republicans and the anarchists — to begin to coalesce. A vain attempt was made to break the neutral front of the so-called “democratic” countries. A series of appointments that granted a decisive majority of the military commands to communists, accompanied by the resignation of the President of the Republic, prepared the ground for a counter-coup led by colonel Casado, who put an end to the dictatorship of Negrín and the PCE. In the blink of an eye the feeble resistance offered by the communists was crushed, but Casado and the National Defense Council were unable to arrange an honorable peace that would spare the Spanish people from the imminent bloody massacre. The end of the war entailed a multitude of sufferings for the defeated, at the mercy of a victor who was thirsting for vengeance if they stayed in Spain, or residence in concentration camps if they managed to escape the country. The postwar period was terrible for the losers; the ruling classes behave cruelly when they win, and they are also cruel when masses of refugees come begging.

Miguel Amorós, September 21, 2016.

Presentation delivered at the Local Office of the CNT of Alacant.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

““**La gran revolución y la guerra**  
*Unas pocas líneas a vuelapluma sobre*  
*la revolución social de 1936 y la guerra civil española*”

## On Jaime Semprun

*An Interview with Miguel Amorós*

Miguel Amorós discusses the life and works of Jaime Semprun, with special emphasis on Semprun's 1997 book, *L'Abîme se repeuple* (The Abyss Repopulates Itself). "Cazarabet" is the name of a bookstore in Mas de las Matas, Spain.



**Cazarabet:** *As a friend of Jaime's who shared his views, what impact do you think the figure of his father, Jorge Semprun, had on him?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Jorge Semprun was his father only in the biological sense. On the few occasions that Jaime, a non-conformist adolescent, mentioned him, he accused his progenitor of having been a Stalinist and therefore of having contributed to the totalitarian work of the pseudo-communist Soviet regime. His father's celebrity as a writer and a friend of politicians seemed vulgar and obscene to Jaime, as it was founded on a big lie from which he derived a good payoff.

Jaime was precisely the opposite. He soberly and discreetly cultivated the truth. He never put his qualities up for sale and he did all he could to distance himself from the monster of publicity; he let it play its game while ignoring it. He was so capable of concealing himself from the spectacle that finding a photograph of him in the media today is "mission impossible".

**Cazarabet:** *But he did of course further develop the ideas of those at whose springs he quenched his thirst for years, so to speak... What was his background?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Quite early in life he acquired a solid literary foundation and, especially after the revolt of May '68, in his philosophical and political education he took giant strides forward in a relatively brief span of time. His library contained a complete inventory of revolution from A to Z. He engaged in a brief flirtation with experimental filmmaking, and he even directed a couple of experimental films, which he later ordered to be destroyed.

He was very much influenced by the situationist critique, because it provided a coherent theoretical basis and historical meaning to the youthful rebelliousness that was so widespread at the time. It gave him reasons and oriented his readings. Talent did the rest.

In 1975, after encouragement by Debord, he was capable of writing the best international defense of the Portuguese Revolution, which took the form of the text, *La Guerra Social en Portugal* [The Social War in Portugal], based exclusively on what he read in the newspapers and the accounts of a comrade who was in Portugal during the revolution.

His relations with Debord were brief and frustrating. Jaime did not expect someone like Debord to be capable of using people like pawns on a chessboard, but in those days Debord was playing at being a strategist.

**Cazarabet:** *A man of rare audacity and, one could say, he was ahead of his time. You knew him well; what can you tell us about him?*

**Miguel Amorós:** He was more like a man who kept abreast of reality, a man who was inflexible with respect to his times, to which he had no desire to accommodate himself. His lucidity arose from his absolute non-conformism with regard to theoretical matters and a formidable capacity for synthesis. He was quick to denounce the recuperative thought fabricated by the ideologists of power from revolutionary materials in a book that has not been translated into Spanish, *Précis de récupération* [Manual of Recuperation].

He never sought spiritual refuge in timeless verities from which one could issue ex cathedra judgments of the world, or, to put it another way, he never hid behind an ideology, and therefore he never succumbed to an epigonic situationism.

Nostalgia did not suit him at all, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, when the possibilities for world revolution that would put an end to the old world, or at least another wave of that revolution, were not yet exhausted.

Back then, we were all still optimistic because the situation of generalized dissatisfaction that characterized the 1960s was still a factor and because the crisis of national capitalism was generating revolts everywhere.

He implacably opposed those who, instead of forging a global critique of class society by way of direct action, reproduced the mystifications of contemporary life by giving them a modernist look. For that reason alone, he was surely never a popular author among militants. He was the last of the revolutionaries in the true style, made on the basis of profundity, truth, rigor, good sense and dialectics.

What was truly special about Jaime is the fact that he made his greatness of spirit compatible with a surprising amiability. Unlike others, such as Debord, for example, Jaime was friendly and welcoming to those who approached him. His collaborators were also his friends and he spent most of his time with them. I don't think he ever really broke off relations with anyone.

He was the most noble, open-hearted and generous person I have ever known. And the only one with a charismatic personality that was capable of productively bringing together a circle of individuals with strong and divergent personalities, and helping bring their projects to fruition.

**Cazarabet:** *He addressed the process of the Spanish transition when he wrote Manuscrito encontrado en Vitoria [Manuscript Found in Vitoria] with you.... At the time, it was published under the name of "Los Incontrolados". Tell us what it was like and what it meant for you and your friends, I assume it was like a minor earthquake, wasn't it?*

**Miguel Amorós:** We first met in 1975, shortly after I went into exile and settled in Montreuil, a town on the outskirts of Paris. We kept in touch with each other and attempted to intervene in the Spanish revolutionary process with a pamphlet, "La Campaña de España de la Revolución europea" [The Spanish Campaign of the European Revolution], which was supposed to be followed by a book to be published by Champ Libre. That book was the "Manuscript...", completely re-written and revised by Jaime.

For bad reasons that have already been discussed in the Introduction to the new edition of the "Manuscript..." published by Pepitas, Debord prevented its publication and we then decided to publish it in Spain in the form of a pamphlet. I had in the meantime returned from exile and the "Manuscript..." was intended to be used as the basis for the formation of an autonomous group in Spain.

Unlike the Portuguese events, the unsustainable situation of the declining Franco regime and the impulse of the Spanish workers movement were publicized in all the European communications media and as a result it was all the more necessary to publish a strong dose of truth, for which the “Manuscript...” was an excellent vehicle, in Spain itself. The text, published in April 1977, did not represent any kind of earthquake, since the urgent demands of the labor movement and trade unionism of every variety and type were much more important at the time than the battle of ideas.

The proletariat did not want to abolish its condition under the capitalist regime and therefore was perfectly willing to coexist with every kind of ideology until its self-destruction as a revolutionary class. The “Manuscript...” was not totally ignored but it did not have any influence on the course of events, either. It has nonetheless been reprinted on several occasions, a sign that interest in that missed opportunity for the Spanish revolution has not entirely disappeared. It is a text that is still not obsolete.

**Cazarabet:** *With regard to what you said about Jaime being “ahead of his time” because he was just that and he showed, at least it seems to me, that in those days it was more difficult to denounce nuclear power than it is today, although it is just as necessary today as it was then — what can you tell us about this? And it was a major turning point in his career, since that was when he wrote La Nucléarisation du monde [The Nuclearization of the World]. It was an important new beginning.*

**Miguel Amorós:** The proliferation of nuclear power plants as a capitalist response to the energy crisis of the seventies provoked widespread opposition that was capable of concentrating much larger masses of people than those that were mobilized to challenge the continuous closing of enterprises that could no longer compete in a world market without customs barriers.

The accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, not far from New York, in March 1979, revealed that the nuclearization of the capitalist countries implied a series of measures of population control which, under the pretext of security, is tending towards the establishment of a police state.

Capital is no longer content with exploiting the workers and imposing a way of life upon them that is in conformance with the laws of the commodity; it can also plan their deaths by way of nuclear terror and its effects.

*The Nuclearization of the World* was published as an anonymous pamphlet in 1980 by the journal, *L'Assommoir*. In that book, Jaime repudiated moralistic criticism by employing an original device, the spurious defense, or satire disguised as apologetics, in emulation of Swift's style in “A Modest Proposal For

preventing the Children of Poor People From being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and For making them Beneficial to the Publick”.

His collaboration with *L'Assommoir* made it possible to publish a French translation of the “Manuscript...” and a text defending the Portuguese Revolution against the pusillanimous Bordigism of a handful of ideologists who specialized in denying the evidence of modern revolutions like May ‘68, the Portuguese Revolution and the Spanish Revolution. This important document, *Les syllogismes démoralisateurs*, was never published in a Spanish edition, whereas the foul excretions of anti-councilist ultra-Leninism found a minuscule, but persistent, sectarian audience, in the virtual space, of course. Such is the fascination exercised by abstract extremism on impotent neo-militantism.

The fourth issue of the journal was devoted to the Polish revolt, which marked the end of the proletarian cycle that began in 1968. The text, *Consideraciones sobre el estado actual de Polonia* [Considerations on the Current State of Poland], dated January 1981, written for the most part by Jaime, concluded his collaboration with *L'Assommoir* and to a certain extent provided the impulse for a qualitative leap with respect to his critical work, which crystallized with the founding, in the year of Orwell, of the journal, *l'Encyclopédie des nuisances* [Encyclopedia of Nuisances], the most perspicacious of all intransigent publications and the most intransigent of all perspicacious publications.

**Cazarabet:** *What do you mean by “nuisance”?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It is a key concept in the thought of Jaime and his circle. The word “nuisance” is a neologism in French that refers to any factor that molests or harms the common people, and among these factors, some ideal candidates are pollution, nuclear power, wage labor, industrial food, consumerism, *machismo*, experts, leaders, capitalists, etc., and above all, the supreme nuisance: the State.

With the idea of nuisances, the *Encyclopedia* denounced the most common characteristic of the current social organization and the principal result of modern production.

**Cazarabet:** *He was an environmentalist when it was harder to let the cat out of the bag, because at that time people still benefitted financially from the system as it was; although we shouldn't deceive ourselves, there will always be a sector where the pork barrel preferentially rolls, as always...*



**Miguel Amorós:** The word “environmentalist” is often misunderstood; we use the word to designate both the broad multitude of nature lovers and the political activists who engage in action in defense of nature.

Jaime was never an environmentalist, nor did he ever refer to environmentalism in a positive way. Nature is not something distinct from society. To defend it effectively, you must radically transform society.

In fact, the environmental movement, from its very inception, only sought to put a price tag on the destruction of the environment and, at most, to manage catastrophe, but never to subvert the existing social framework. Within that framework, however, there is no possible solution for any problem of real life, beginning with the degradation of nature. In the market of degradation, the environmentalists are like the trade union militants in the framework of the labor market; one is an intermediary interested in the regulation of the contradictions brought about by the exploitation of the territory; the other is an intermediary interested in the regulation of the contradictions brought about by the exploitation of labor. The environmentalists’ existence is bound up with the commodification of nature, as negotiators concerning the permissible degree of harm.

The struggle against nuisances can only be victorious as an anti-economic and anti-state movement, not as a “green” party reconciled with the economy thanks to the formulas of “sustainable” development.

That was the conclusion of the encyclopedists, particularly in their “Message to All Those Who Would Rather Abolish Nuisances than Manage Them”, a pamphlet distributed in 1990.

**Cazarabet:** *But in that work Semprun criticizes the fascination that people have displayed and expressed for the world of machines that are responsible for a certain kind of “social order” ... is that correct?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Machines promise a liberation that, despite its obvious falsehood, continues to exercise an enchantment that is growing stronger as the degeneration of the subjective conditions proceeds. The Encyclopedia could not ignore this.

We started from a situationist conception of the world, but Jaime’s genius introduced some decisive changes: the critique of the idea of progress as a bourgeois legacy; mistrust of science and technology as tools of domination and as vehicles of a superstitious reverence for progress; modern production as the production of nuisances; and the struggle against nuisances as the basic terrain of the new historical consciousness.

These points constituted the basis of the anti-industrial critique (on the peninsula we call it anti-developmentalism), the most pertinent form of contemporary revolutionary critique.

In particular, the reasoned critique of the role of technology in modern alienation and slavery was inspired by the voluminous work of Lewis Mumford (author of *The Myth of the Machine*) and Jacques Ellul (author of *The Technological Society*). And also by Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of "instrumental reason", and Günther Anders' indispensable exposure of the "obsolescence" of the human species caused by the disjunction between technical "advances" and the social inability to assimilate them.

**Cazarabet:** *We shouldn't entertain ourselves with machines and their machinations. What do you think?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It's not just about machines. Modern science and technology are above all else ideologies, as well as subsystems of domination with a totalitarian character.

When they emerge they develop until they completely determine the course of society, and as a result they also colonize life itself. No one can escape their influence—everyone is free to consume them or just put up with them, but no one is immune to their effects, no one is allowed to disconnect.

Under this slavery, life is subjected to such a degree of simplification that it can no longer properly be called life. Individuals, as prostheses of machines, no longer live, they merely function.

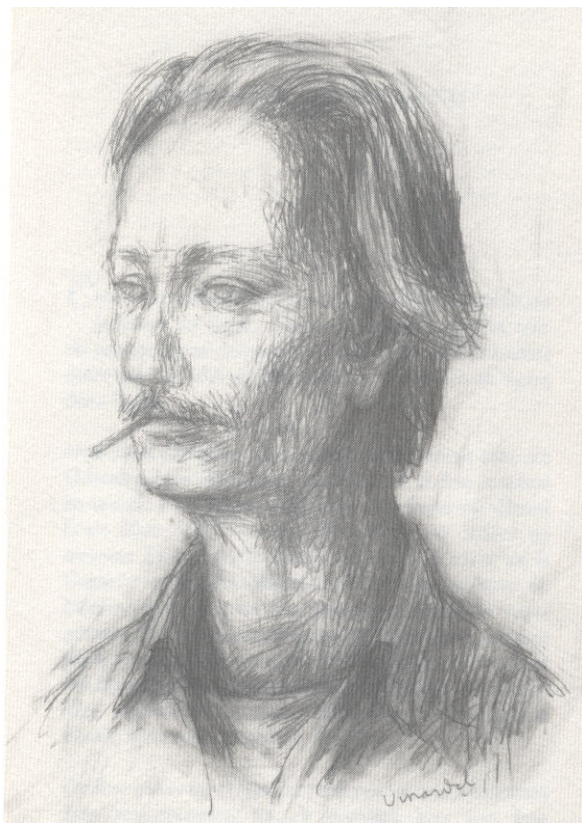
Two examples of this negative aspect of technocracy are high-speed trains and genetic engineering, which merited two collectively-authored pamphlets entitled, respectively, "A Provisional Statement of Our Complaints against the Despotism of Speed" (1991), and "Observations on Genetically Modified Agriculture and the Degradation of the Species" (1999).

Both aroused the anger of leftist workerists, those frenzied supporters of the techno-industrial system which they would like to see placed under the self-management of its victims.

**Cazarabet:** *Then in 1997 this book was published, which is now being reprinted in a new edition by Pepitas de Calabaza, El Abismo se Repuebla [original title: L'Abîme se repeuple - The Abyss Repopulates Itself]. What can you tell us about the piano keys that our Jaime Semprun plays with such somber tones...?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The Editions Encyclopédie des Nuisances (EdN) was at first an extension of the critical project initiated with the journal, but the stagnation

of the collective labor involved in writing articles transformed the publishing house into the heir of the original publication. With the books published by the EdN, the anti-industrial critique acquired a solid basis and the vacillating position of the journal as a bridge between the situationist critique and anti-productivism was superseded.



Jaime Semprun by Pascal-Vinardel

*The Abyss Repopulates Itself* constitutes a milestone in the fight against the false consciousness of our time. Jaime was proceeding towards a systematic critique of the economic horror, already outlined in his two previous books, his two previous musical scores. The “Dialogues on the Consummation of Modern Times”, signed by Jaime, is a “*detournement*” of Berthold Brecht’s “Dialogues d’exilés” (“Flüchtlingsgespräche” — Exiles’ Dialogues), and in this form

reconstructs a conversation in which the various aspects of the collapse of social consciousness, a sign of the consummation of bourgeois modernity, are reviewed: today we all have the right to think, but we have lost the ability to do so. Under these conditions, the useless knowledge of disaster leads to resignation, and that is why mere verification is not enough and why we have to attack those who are responsible for these crimes.

The problem of the weakness of consciousness in an epoch in which the radical transformation of social relations is so necessary is particularly obvious in contemporary workers' protests, which, when they come to an end, leave no trace. The main features of the decline of the traditional working class, now incapable of questioning the world of the commodity, were exposed in the text, "Observations concerning the Paralysis of December", a collective work signed by the Encyclopedia.

**Cazarabet:** *He asked, what kind of world are we going to leave to our children? But he also went further, and asked, what kind of children are we going to leave to our world? What does he actually mean by this?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It was not Jaime who asked the first question, but the citizen-environmentalist, who does not want to see that barbarism arises like a force of nature from the total technologization of life to which he is totally devoted. The dehumanization caused by this technological invasion also entails the more disturbing consequence of rearing a multitude of children-consumers, without any real childhood, but perfectly adapted to the simplification of life brought about by machines.

**Cazarabet:** *To what extent is the book a turning point in critical revolutionary thought?*

**Miguel Amorós:** The reflections contained in *The Abyss Repopulates Itself* are grim, and correspond to the darkest moment for rational thought which is simultaneously the high point of irrationality. The working class milieu has been destroyed by mass culture; the abstract universality of the commodity and dramatic advances in the technology of surveillance are now taken for granted.

Jaime said what no one wanted to hear, that history has been abolished by power, that there are no environments where revolutionary consciousness can be rejuvenated, that the vanguard of modernity, or more accurately, of post-modernity, was in fact the vanguard of alienation, among whose ranks we find not only the old leftists recycled into the civil society movement, but also a good part of the extra-parliamentary spectrum, libertarian and non-libertarian, the part that is fighting on behalf of an extremist version of the values that are dissolving the new order.

He spoke of the new forms of barbarism that issue from a life devoted to the present moment, of the bleak future of the new generations brutalized by the spectacle, of the use by domination of terrorist opposition and even of the simple, everyday instruments of its perpetuation, of the role of the new middle classes as the social base of politically correct decomposition and, finally, he spoke of the abyss, of the spaces abandoned by the system, where the desperate masses turn against everything, and against themselves.

Jaime had the merit of not falling prey to any illusions, and of depicting the real conditions of our time, when the veracious reconceptualization of the social question could not be more difficult.

After *The Abyss Repopulates Itself*, critical thought abandoned the solid foundation of the old obsolete, useless verities, and embarked upon an unstable terrain. There cannot be a social revolution without revolutionary thought, but the historical movement in which the latter was inscribed can only be reconstituted with great difficulty.

**Cazarabet:** *As a critic of industrial society he would have gotten along quite well with Ludd?*

**Miguel Amorós:** He said that industry has been waging war on life for more than two centuries. It is undoubtedly true that he would have felt just as much at home among the machine wreckers as he would have felt out of place among the language wreckers, the pseudo-Luddites of liquid modernity. Of course, he would have gotten along quite well with García Calvo, too. He rediscovered, in Orwell's 1984, the term "Newspeak" to describe a radical linguistic overhaul intended to make a clean break with the past, a re-elaboration demanded by industrial society and its technology: "*It is the natural language of a world that is becoming increasingly more artificial*", as Jaime declared in his book, *Defense and Illustration of French Newspeak* (2005).

Without our even noticing it, we use a technically inflected language that hinders the formulation of coherent reasoning, even in the milieu of protest "lite"; just consider such barbarous terms as "intersectionality", "transversality", "empowerment", "poly-love", "rhizome", "queer", etc.

Returning to Ned Ludd, or rather to Captain Swing, Jaime called attention to a revolt that went largely unnoticed precisely because of its subversive potential of a new kind: the Algerian revolt of the "*ârchs*", the ancient tribal councils transformed by insurrectional necessities into popular assemblies. Tradition and novelty, youth and experience, all converged in the revolt of the Kabyles, conferring a maximum degree of freedom to resist the police state with unexpected success. The participants in the assemblies were true Luddites

confronting the state bureaucracy in defense of their traditional ways of life which, in the end, were too modern to coexist with state power. *The Apology for the Algerian Insurrection*, published in 2001, reveals Jaime's less intellectual side, his instinct for insurrection that was already manifested in *The Social War in Portugal* and in "The Manuscript Found in Vitoria".

**Cazarabet:** *What were his views during his last years? What was the message he was trying to convey?*

**Miguel Amorós:** Jaime died suddenly in August 2010, with his boots on. Therefore, his views were still evolving. His last book, published in 2008, *Catastrophism, Disaster Management and Sustainable Submission*, written in close collaboration with René Riesel, is a continuation of the work of demolition undertaken in his previous writings, which he assiduously cited. The book did not mark the end of a cycle, nor did it put the final touch on any debates, which is why it cannot be considered as a testament. It is simply a verification of his previous analyses, in aggravated circumstances: neoliberal capitalism can now be defined as disaster capitalism.

The book includes, as an appendix, the text of *The Ghosts of Theory*, a supplementary critical gem that examines the magical objectivism that resolves every practical question from the vantage point of the writer's desk. There is no theoretical sphere that is immune to contradictions; no ideological certainty escapes the hammer and *Catastrophism* is proof of this.

Without a revolutionary subject that will rectify the situation and dismantle industrial mass society, the official future that lies in store for humanity is extinction.

The real catastrophe is not the one that our leaders are announcing, but the persistent blindness of the oppressed majority, which lacks the will to act on the causes of its oppression, and basically wants the same things that are offered by the owners of the world. We must face the fact that the deterioration of life is not driving the masses to revolt but to a condition of submissive adaptation. The most absolute conformism prevails without any effective opposition. Conflicts dissolve with shocking ease among citizens re-educated in green consumerism and internet voting. Disaster management underlies the policies of all States, which are, in their own way, environmentalists. The catastrophism of official propaganda justifies compulsory submission to the directives of a now-"sustainable" domination.

To quote a former member of "Socialisme ou barbarie" who died in 1979, Pierre Souyri:

“Capitalism has entered a stage in which it will be compelled to introduce a series of new technologies for energy production, mineral extraction, recycling wastes, etc., transforming part of the natural elements that are necessary for life into commodities.”

This is the stage of “sustainability”, that is, of the authoritarian regulation of the world economy based on environmental emergencies.

This analysis sounds familiar because we already read something similar in *The Nuclearization of the World*. The wars for oil, minerals or water, along with all the other geopolitical operations by which zones of influence are defined, are the consequences of the bureaucratic-environmentalist reconversion of the capitalist world.

Those who try to oppose the system from within, who are treated so badly in the book, will accuse Jaime and René of being pessimists, or even defeatists. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rebels still exist, the critical imagination resides in those who have not thrown in the towel, who have not lost their taste for freedom and who fight to live without constraints:

“In times crushed by the prospect of the worst, possibilities are still just as open.”

You could say that was his message.

Miguel Amorós, april 9, 2017.

Translated in May 2017 from the Spanish original, “Cazarabet conversa con Miguel Amorós sobre el libro *El abismo se repuebla* (Pepitas de Calabaza) de Jaime Semprún”, La Librería de El Sueño Igualitario, April 28, 2017.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

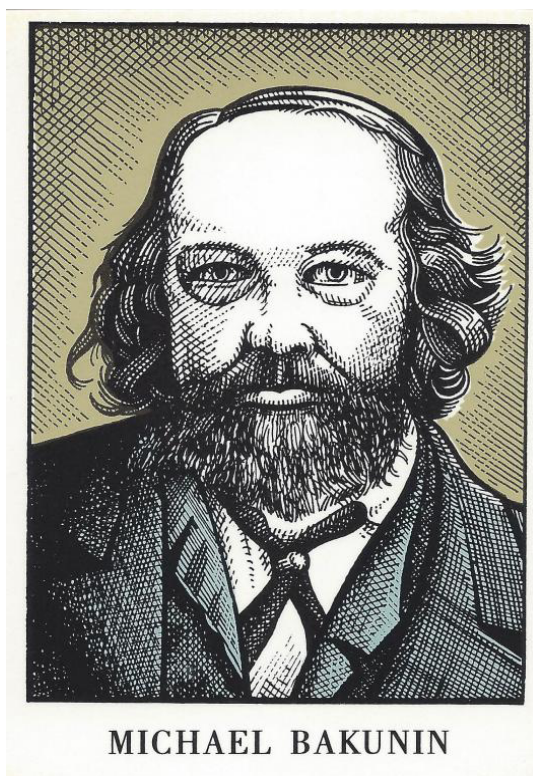
## Bakunin

Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876) is strikingly relevant for our time, as contemporary society is becoming visibly totalitarian and acquiring features that are distinctly hostile to freedom. The real Bakunin was the product of the impact of German idealist philosophy and the French Revolution on the enlightened generations of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Just like many of his contemporaries, after reading Hegel and Feuerbach, Bakunin's state of mind was one of constant unrest and relentless protest against all the ideological, religious and metaphysical fetishes of the established powers. That is what the realization of philosophy comes to when the bourgeoisie helps abort its own revolution. In his own way, Bakunin inverted Hegelian idealism: reason, the "idea", full realization, and therefore, freedom, are not embodied in the State, but in people without States. They possess objectivity, truth and ethical existence; the State is nothing but a moment in their development. Consciousness and will merge and turn against the State and politics. Bakunin's writings would be incomprehensible in isolation from his life, of which they form a part, a life in constant conflict against all authority, secular or divine, liberal or absolutist. All his works are marked by the imprint of action, almost the sole motive and principle of his existence, which was soon associated with a revolutionary exaltation founded on two pillars: the passion for freedom and hatred for all forms of oppression. Every one of his letters, articles, programs and manuscripts pertain to an activist project that renders them intelligible; they are reflections of the struggles in which he engaged and they were conceived in specific situations, with precise objectives in mind. They had nothing in common with the tranquil state of mind of the scholar who, in the silence of a library, attempts to understand reality in the light of scientific research. In the beginning was the deed, as we read in *Faust*. The determinations of reality never stand still.

Bakunin declared that he was "a passionate seeker of the truth", which is incomprehensible in our postmodern age, and also that he was a no less passionate enemy of all political, juridical, economic and social lies that are used by those in power to assure their privileges and to rule the world. Although his thought was based on solid materialist philosophical foundations, in Bakunin we do not find a social theory properly speaking whose scope goes beyond the



exigencies posed by the struggle, nor do we find any intention to construct a system with a closed worldview, a pre-packaged system fully equipped with its principles, first causes and ultimate goals. Having read Comte, Bakunin detested metaphysics, and the conceptual tools that he developed, taken from observation and knowledge, had no other purpose than to more accurately understand reality in order to reinforce the capacity for action.



By Clifford Harper

He only wrote when a passionate conviction impelled him to do so. In Bakunin, we are not confronted by a theoretician, a professional writer or a scholar, although he had an abundance of imagination for creation and talent for writing, and more than enough erudition: he was above all a revolutionary, an agitator, a soldier of freedom, a constant conspirator against despotism, both in its old forms, based on traditional submission to the established order, and its

more modern forms, disguised in the garb of liberty and the revolution. The most complete freedom and equality were for him the foundations of the only regime in which human beings can fully develop, conduct themselves with dignity and experience happiness. And this regime was incompatible with the State form. Political power and communal society are irreconcilable.

Human beings are not only rational and logical, but also passionate and prone to dream. His nature as a man of action conferred upon Bakunin's writings the lucidity of strategy, which obliges clear discernment due to the imperatives of the struggle; but they were also affected by the visionary profundity of the dream, which is so necessary for ennobling the aspirations for human emancipation. Both factors, the fruit of a dual intellectual and personal adventure, gave his ideas a power that is still felt today, since we must not forget that today's oppression is far more extensive and sophisticated than it was in his time; at the same time, however, his ideas are resistant to being adapted by epigones or enemies in order to convert them into a system, an ideology, or a recipe book of perennial truths for the decoration of execrable practices. Bakunin's romantic activism was always accompanied by an almost exhaustive knowledge of history and the most advanced thought of his time; this is why it is not easy to imitate him, either in practice or in theory. This is not to say that there have not been many attempts to misrepresent him, since recuperation and looting are the characteristics of an irrational present with abundant and pretentious ignorance. Once he had been decontextualized and purged of contradictions, or, more accurately, mummified and canonized, Bakunin was wielded as an authority, which he would have definitely found repugnant, to justify all-embracing doctrines of every type and to confer legitimacy on the libertarian ghetto, whether in its official or alternative version. He has even been cited as an authority by syndicalist and nationalist variants, by the founders of "specificist" parties and by the most irrational varieties of extremism. When revolutionary action goes into decline, truth also goes into decline and ideology advances. Ideology, however, is false consciousness, not anarchism. Anarchism is either revolutionary practice or it is nothing.

Although Bakunin has become synonymous with anarchy, his definitive anarchist activity took place only during the last period of his life, between 1863, the year of the defeat of the Polish insurrection in which he participated, and 1873, the year of his retirement and the expansion of Prussian imperialism. In 1864 he broke with democratic pan-Slavism and renounced any intention to transform, by way of a democratic and social revolution, the cause of the peoples without history, such as the Slavs, into a universal cause. The realization of freedom in history would then have other protagonists for him, that is,

humble and downtrodden peoples without distinction, beginning with the Italians, who were then engaged in open revolt against the Church and the aristocracy. The transformation of universal society would be effected “on the basis of freedom, reason, justice and labor”, as we read in the program of the “International Brotherhood”, the first practical formulation of revolutionary anarchism. Empires were tottering like idols with feet of clay; any proposed course of action had to take into account the possibility of the imminence of a popular revolution that would dissolve the States and reorganize society “from the bottom-up and from the circumference to the center”. Bakunin proclaimed that he was a socialist democrat and a federalist, at least up until 1868, when he broke with the radical and progressive republican bourgeoisie. Then he flirted, like Proudhon, with the double meaning of the word “anarchist”, but even so, his supporters were becoming more and more likely to lay claim to the adjectives “anti-state” or “anti-authoritarian”. Following his break with the League of Peace and Freedom, the “people” in the abstract sense of the word would, for him, cease to be the subject that realizes freedom and equality in history, a mission that he would from then on attribute to the working classes.

Bakunin had a peculiar idea of class. The revolutionary subject was constituted by separating itself as much as possible from the established power and its norms. The proletarians were capable of revolution only if they were not corrupted by material and political interests. By keeping themselves morally intact, they would conserve all their energy and potential for revolt; they would never allow themselves to be deceived by charismatic leaders or programs alien to the logic of the world of labor, their world. The more indifferent they were towards bourgeois values, and the more they turned their backs on bourgeois civilization, the greater would be the harvest of the seeds of socialism that lie dormant within them. Evidently, the sectors of the working class that were not corrupted by politics and authority, the most disinherited and the most impoverished, constituted the “flower of the proletariat”, the absolute negation of class society, those who bore in their instincts and their aspirations the resplendent future of freedom. The interests of the most favored or integrated layers of the working class could not be universal interests, and therefore could not serve as motive forces for a process of radical transformation. In the hands of bourgeoisified workers, the idea of class played the same mystifying function as the fatherland, the nation or the race. It had to be used with caution. Furthermore, his absolute refusal to consider the sufficient development of the productive forces as the obligatory precondition for revolution brought Bakunin into conflict with the Marxist socialists. Bakunin thought that there could be a revolution in countries where the proletariat was not highly

developed and capitalism was weak; in such a revolution the principal role of protagonist would fall to the peasantry, the natural class, alongside of whom the artisanal proletariat and the déclassé urban youth were mere auxiliary forces. Moreover, a revolution was much more likely in such countries than in those where the revolution would have to be based exclusively on the factories. In retrospect, the Mexican, Russo-Ukrainian and Spanish Revolutions corroborate the accuracy of his assessment.

His application for membership in the International Workingmen's Association was the culmination of the process that had begun when he renounced democratic nationalism. At this point, for Bakunin the political emancipation of the working people, that is, the abolition of the State and of the political class, had to be absorbed in their economic emancipation, that is, the liberation of labor from the yoke of capital. History would reach its end when freedom is complete. The organization of the productive forces and public services would have to be carried out collectively and horizontally, without either coercion or the imposition of any authority whatsoever; and therefore on the ruins of the State. This is why such a regime is defined as collectivism. For Bakunin, the word "communism", which he associated with the doctrines of Cabet, Weitling and Marx, had the connotation of a barracks-style form of organization mediated by authority. Capitalist society was based more on the principle of authority than on that of property. The development of capitalism required an increasingly more centralized State where all its subjects were citizens. Citizenship is the modern form of servitude. The condition of political dependence of the masses went hand in hand with their economic dependence; they mutually reinforced one another. The accuracy of his analyses would be revealed by the Paris Commune. With the outbreak of war between France and Prussia, the first serious opportunity for proletarian revolution arose. Bakunin saw the defeat of Napoleon III as opening up the possibility of transforming a war between States into a revolutionary war. Only a popular revolution that represented the communes could save Europe from the reactionary forces represented by Prussia and the Russian Empire, but the provisional government of the French bourgeoisie drowned all such attempts in blood. The end of the Commune marked the victory of the European counterrevolution.

For Bakunin, a free and egalitarian society could not be born from a directory that unilaterally dictates laws. Freedom could only arise from freedom, not from submission to an authority, even if this authority proclaims that it is revolutionary. As a result, Bakunin would never even consider the possibility of emancipation guided by the State, whether a people's State or a proletarian State, since the suppression of the State was the starting point, the precondition

without which the revolution would be nothing but an ephemeral fiction. He rejected the establishment of an authoritarian center that, on the pretext of organizing the revolution, would enthrone a red bureaucracy, the new ruling class. Such centralist plans could only function in a country like Germany with a servile population and a disciplined factory proletariat. Not in Spain, for example, a country with hardly any factories, where Fanelli carried out his famous mission to found the first sections of the International in Spain, with well-known repercussions. It is obvious that such views would sooner or later have to result in an open clash with Marx's Jacobinism and with the reformism of his followers, who were convinced believers in the peaceful or violent conquest of political power in the name of the working class. Marx did not spare any efforts in his attempt to expel Bakunin from the IWA. We are not at all interested here in describing the dishonest procedures used by Marx, or Bakunin's secret organizations, however. The victory of the reactionary forces in France, Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain inaugurated a long period of reaction. Revolutionary passion was nowhere to be found among the masses, the general movement went into decline and no flanking maneuvers could create a force to be reckoned with. Bakunin, at the end of his life, confirmed the fact that the revolution "had gone to sleep" and that it would be no easy matter to wake it up again.

The International split into two parts, and both fractions soon dissolved. The subsequent development of the workers movement proceeded in two opposite directions that would never converge, which is why the Marx-Bakunin debate has persisted for so many years. In fact, however, history has rendered all forms of anarchism and Marxism obsolete; there have been so many capitalist innovations, so many debatable affairs, that becoming embroiled in that particular debate would be sterile. The differences of opinion, the particular problems of the time, and the antipathies that separated Marx and Bakunin in 1872 do not obviate the critical contributions of either, some of which are still relevant today, in the midst of full-blown global turbo-capitalism. The dead part is what has been used to manufacture ideological monstrosities baptized with the names of "Marxism" and "Bakuninism". However, while Bakunin has hardly anything to do with the milieu that lays claim to his heritage, Marx has even less to do with his spurious heirs. Marx's disciples shaved off his beard during the Russian Revolution, where his teachings were transformed into the cruel religion of a totalitarian State; as for the Bakunin, his followers turned his teachings into a gradualist, federalist and democratic statism in the Spanish Revolution. A new bourgeoisie of ideologues, delegates and functionaries is

always born from the ashes of a betrayed and annihilated revolution, adapting their masters' words to their own pharisaical prose.

After Bakunin's death on July 1, 1876, the dissolution of the IWA, and the resurgence of reaction, the workers movement entered a defensive, underground phase, characterized by constant organizational work and propaganda. For anarchism, this was the time of its ideological stabilization, which led to diverse tactics and orientations. The passage of anarchism from being a doctrine of action, of facts, intertwined with the workers movement, so characteristic of Bakunin, to the anarchism of propaganda, of ideas, external to the movement, typical, for example, of Kropotkin, Grave, Reclus and Malatesta, entailed the separation of doctrinal activity from the class struggle. The libertarian conception of the world suffered irreparable damage. Bakuninist materialism, based on the dialectical relation between thought and action, individual and society, revolutionary subject and objective reality, yielded to a vulgar, ahistorical, eclectic, determinist and scientific materialism. A petrified opposition to rationalist optimism based on study and science engendered an individualist anarchism based either on will and love, or else on egoism, by introducing Stirner into the anarchist pantheon. In this manner, revolution and insurrection, communist ideal and pragmatic resistance, constructive effort and destructive passion, individual interest and collective interest, were separated. Anarchism became an ideology, or, more accurately, a doctrinal ensemble for three or four factions, the exclusive purview of doctrinaires of proven faith, and no longer the conscious expression of the revolutionary workers movement. Libertarian thought and class struggle were no longer two aspects of a single reality that was manifested in the movement of history, and were divided into the preserve of thinkers and moralists on the one side, and neutral or inert nature on the other, dominated by the principle of causality. This deviation, which also affected the Marxist camp, was the mother of every kind of confusion, giving rise to an array of individualist, naturist, economic, syndicalist and communist beliefs, destined to multiply, increasingly undermining the possibilities that anarchists might be able to influence the social process.

It cannot be said that all the accumulated labors of agitation were in vain, nor that the revolt that inspired those labors was insincere, and to the extent that it was based on reality anarchism was still capable of contributing brilliant pages to history. The forces of order, however, have registered one victory after another, and therefore humanity is constantly declining. It is clear that humanity will not be able to get out of the sewer in which it finds itself except by way of a profound revolution, but is such a revolution really desired? Does humanity even possess the means by which it can formulate its desires? We hope that the time will come when the answer to these questions will be an

unequivocal yes. In the meantime, the only thing that is driving the state apparatus and the market towards disaster is their own contradictions. Building spaces for freedom, solidarity and equality in the present chaos would seem to be the most reasonable outlook, but as Bakunin himself might say: what an outlook!

Miguel Amorós, for Editorial Imperdible, May 12, 2017.

*Introducción de BAKUNIN Mijaíl Obras Completas Mijail BAKUNIN.*

*Tomo I. Estatismo y anarquía*, Madrid: Editorial Imperdible,

Coordinadas por Frank Mintz, 304 p, 2018.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

## The Situationists and May 1968

May '68 was the biggest mass upheaval in the history of France and the concurrent wildcat general strike was the most important strike in the history of the European workers movement since World War Two. Nowhere else was the rejection of the new model of consumerist life more profound, or so closely linked with the class struggle. Its impact reached every social category, wage earning sector, region and city in France, and lasted for years. A whole literature of agitation and a long series of anti-authoritarian conflicts testify to this fact. It had repercussions in all the highly-developed and developing capitalist countries, and, to judge by the precipitous haste that characterized the actions of the ruling classes in setting up intelligence services devoted to monitoring the new forms of subversion, and also by repeated attempts to disparage, conceal and assimilate it on the part of sociologists, historians, militants of the left-wing of the civil society movement and other exegetes of order, its influence is still felt today. Its survival in memory, however, was its only major victory; our contemporary society is not its offspring, but rather the product of the defeat of the working class, the enormous growth of the State and the efforts to recuperate it engaged in by a whole generation of university intellectuals. A myriad of interpreters have tried to establish an official history of the "May events", manipulating and distorting the historical material, when not inventing it *ex nihilo*, since the intellectual climate of domination demands counter-truths that function in the variable conditions of statism and globalization. To penetrate to the real history, one must proceed in a different way, by reading the texts of those who were part of the movement and were capable of expressing its nature and its aspirations better than anyone else. In this respect, the writings of the situationists stand head and shoulders above the rest. They provide, with more precision than others, the keys of the May revolt, or as the "situs" themselves called it, the "occupations movement".

For most observers, including card-carrying leftists and anarchists, May '68 was a totally unforeseen event, spontaneous, practically unexpected. Capitalism had overcome the most destructive aspects of its crises, the economy was firing on all cylinders and the contracts negotiated with the employers by the trade union bureaucracy, often promoted in parliaments by party leaders, assured a comfortable existence for the majority of the wage earning population. Its



children were beginning to attend the universities. The social question had not been posed in revolutionary terms since the Bolshevik counterrevolution and the defeat of the Spanish revolution. The struggle of the workers for their emancipation from capital ran up against the walls of alienated life, and even more so against the workers' bureaucracies, experts in deactivating these struggles. It seemed that the working class was living in a happy world, closed off in its everyday concerns, cheerfully represented by political and trade union executives and abundantly equipped with every kind of object. Nothing was more foreseeable for the situationists, however, than that revolt, that rejection of the realm of the commodity that was so cogently proclaimed in their publications. They had predicted the coming of a time of disorders, although, of course, without setting an exact date for its onset. There had already been some ominous signs that anticipated it, which were very clear for those who knew how to read them. The militants of leftism, brainwashed by Maoist China, by the resplendent image of Red October, by the mystified past of the CNT, or by the illusions of guerrilla war, did not know how to read them.

In the years leading up to 1968 there was a considerable amount of unrest among the French working class, which, going beyond the framework established by labor negotiations, took to the streets. The trade union leaders were bypassed by the workers, who disobeyed their directives and fought the police, sometimes with the help of students. It was possible to discern behind this changing attitude of the workers in the factories, offices, mills and mines, the decomposition of the pseudo-communist bureaucracy. In addition, the rejection of capitalist modernization foreshadowed a critique of life subjected to the imperatives of production and consumption. This is not to say that the workers had become dialecticians by reading the Situationist International, which is very unlikely, but that situationist ideas were present in the atmosphere of latent confrontation that everyone was breathing and they were understood correctly enough. The "situationist" had only attempted to establish relations between their ideas and this environment of latent confrontation within a coherent and total critique of reality that began to be surprisingly communicable. In fact, the return of the concept of revolution cannot be restricted to France. Similar processes provoked violent riots in the East as well as the West. In the United States, with the Free Speech Movement, the struggle for civil rights and protest against the war in Vietnam; in Europe, with anti-bureaucratic struggles, student unrest and workers struggles in various countries (especially in Spain); and also in Japan and Mexico, etc. It was precisely in France, however, where the ideal conditions were present, more so than anywhere else, for the encounter between the arms of critique and the critique of arms, the historical conjuncture that could unify the access to

consciousness of individuals with the joint action of the class. It was therefore in France that the workers movement crossed the threshold in order to come face to face with its authentic goals and to embark upon a radical struggle, criticizing with actions alienated life, capitalism, ideological religion and the State. And just what concrete role did the SI play in all of this?



The Situationist International was founded with the objective of formulating a revolutionary program within the domain of culture. The cultural revolution, understood as the subversion of everyday life under capitalism, was the creative complement of the social revolution. Once it was convinced of the impossibility of any autonomy in the artistic and cultural sphere, the SI would abandon its

previous experimentalism and would then devote its efforts to theoretical work in accordance with the models established by the Marxist-Hegelian method, seeking its application on the terrain of class struggle. From that point on, it would cease to regard itself as an artistic vanguard and would define itself as a revolutionary organization. Its work was almost confidential, underground, with a very limited reach, enveloped in a dense fog. It did not go entirely unnoticed, but the priests of the world of the intellect preferred to pirate its ideas while simultaneously silencing it, a characteristic procedure that would be rapidly terminated by a sensational scandal. In 1966, in Strasbourg, the funds of the local section of the student union, UNEF, in the hands of legitimately elected sympathizers of the SI, were used to print a spectacularly critical pamphlet that subjected the little world of the university to a cruel and precise X-ray, while at the same time offering a situationist analysis of modern class society. The title of the pamphlet could not have been more explicit: "On the Poverty of Student Life: considered in its economic, political, psychological, sexual, and particularly intellectual aspects, and a modest proposal for its remedy." The wave of indignation that it aroused in the bourgeois and Catholic press, and among the authorities of the university departments and bureaucrats and Stalinist politicians, was only exacerbated when the local section of UNEF, which was responsible for publishing the pamphlet, denounced the fraud of student unions and called for the dissolution of UNEF. The pamphlet went through one print run after another, and it was soon being distributed throughout all of France. Its sudden popularity attracted a multitude of readers in search of back issues of the journal, *Internationale Situationniste*. The publication on October 11, 1967 of issue No. 11 of the journal, along with the release shortly thereafter of *The Society of the Spectacle* and *The Revolution of Everyday Life* [original title: *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations*—the objectivity of historical thought and the point of view of radical subjectivity, respectively—put the theoretical corpus of the situationists on center stage. Celebrity came suddenly and seemed to know no limits. Soon, hundreds of people were seriously considering a project of subversion that would have been dismissed as unrealistic and vicious on any other occasion.

In the meantime, the tide was rising. On the one hand, there were the workers, who coordinated their activities outside of the trade unions, ignored their usual demands for reform and wage hikes, and looted supermarkets and organized general strikes. On the other hand, there were the students, who questioned dormitory regulations, shut down the offices of campus psychologists, brandished red and black flags, and occupied university administration offices and tribunals. A group had formed at the progressive university of Nanterre in early 1968 which

called itself the “Enragés”, named after the extremists of the French Revolution, which set itself apart from the usual run of leftists, with no other purpose than to put an end to the university system by way of the continuous sabotage of its operations. Its members distributed ingenious leaflets in the classrooms, produced by the former members of the disbanded “Anarchist International”, most of whom were illustrators, in their free time; they insulted the professors and composed songs; and finally, they painted provocative phrases on the walls. This was a style of agitation that infringed upon and ridiculed the propagandistic rules of the little leftist groups, a style that was much favored by the situationists, who soon contacted the group, but it was not to the liking of the communist daily newspaper *L'Humanité*, which, in its March 29 issue publicly denounced the “commando actions” of an enigmatic group of anarchists and “situationists”. The activities of no more than forty people forced the university to close, and the university’s judicial inquiry initiated against a handful of agitators unleashed a series of protests with fateful consequences for the forces of order. The dance began on May 3 with the uprising of the Latin Quarter. The first barricades were built with bricks and burned cars on May 6. The street skirmishes continued during the following days, along with the burning of vehicles and the looting of stores. Workers, high school students and hoodlums from the outskirts of the city eagerly joined the fray. These elements soon outnumbered the university students. On the night of May 10, once all the stalling maneuvers of the new leaders and the old organizations had failed, more than sixty barricades were built. The leftist “vanguardists” vanished. Many young people waved black flags. Violent confrontations with the police attained such a scale that there were hundreds of arrests and injuries. On the following morning, the trade unions, which until then had condemned the movement, proclaimed a general strike so that it would not be declared without their consent and conducted outside of their control. The French government wanted to adopt a wait-and-see attitude and withdrew the police from the Latin Quarter, thus facilitating the occupation of the Sorbonne. On May 13, after a demonstration attended by one million people, an open Sorbonne was converted into a stage for assembly democracy, where all questions were supposed to be debated. Later that same day, a “détournement” of the saying by the priest Meslier, “humanity will not be happy until the day when the last bureaucrat is hung with the guts of the last capitalist”, was painted on one of the big frescos adorning the walls of the Sorbonne, which caused a scandal. The spontaneous graffiti that successfully drew everyone’s attention made their appearance. On May 14, the Enragés-S.I. Committee was formed, and immediately drafted several posters for mass distribution; one warning against the illusion of direct democracy circumscribed within the walls of the classrooms, and

another warning of the presence of “recuperators”; another denouncing art and “separation”; and finally, another poster called for the de-Christianization of the Sorbonne, which aroused the anger of various believers who were present. On the same day the first general assembly of the occupation was held.

The Maoist and Trotskyist leftists easily dominated the assemblies; they were specialists in rhetorical manipulation and were capable of neutralizing, almost without effort, any critical opinion that was not to their liking. The situationists, numbering no more than four persons, were not orators, and registered their conclusions concerning the possible directions the movement might take in the circular, “From the SI in Paris to the Members of the SI and the Comrades who have Declared Themselves in Accord with our Theses”: either the movement would wear itself out and disappear, or it would succumb to repression due to its inability to win the active support of the working class, or it could unleash a revolution. Their positions were defended by an “enragé” tribune: Freedom for all those who had been arrested (including looters), abolition of wage labor, classes, “survival” and the “spectacle”. For this tribune, and for the situationists, the university question had been superseded by the events themselves and the future of the movement depended on its continued participation in the struggle at the side of the workers, and keeping abreast of the manipulators. He warned of the attempts of the Stalinists to liquidate the movement which did not take long to take shape, and concluded by calling for the absolute power of the Workers Councils. His speech aroused a great deal of opposition; he was nonetheless elected to serve as a member of the “Occupation Committee”. Other universities were occupied, following the example of the Sorbonne, in Paris and in the provinces. The Committee was not welcomed by the leftists, who rendered it ineffective by constructing various parallel committees that assumed responsibility for the needs of the occupation: defense, logistics, allocation of office space, press, maintenance of order, etc. An unelected Coordinating Committee was then foisted on the assembly as an auxiliary of an Occupation Committee without any ability to execute its directives; in response, the “enragé” delegate denounced the obstructionist tactics of the bureaucrats and successfully forced them to back off. On the morning of May 16, echoing the simultaneous strikes of the workers, the Occupation Committee issued an appeal for “the immediate occupation of all the factories in France and the formation of Workers Councils”. Without any means to disseminate its appeal, it was forced to call a meeting of a number of revolutionaries and ask them to spread the word with leaflets and bullhorns, and via telephone. Numerous volunteers read the Committee’s appeal in the auditoriums of other universities and notified the local press agencies and radio stations of its contents. As it

turned out, contrary to all bureaucratic expectations, it was heard by the workers, and the wildcat occupation was approved in their assemblies. That evening, disregarding the orders of its trade union representatives, the working class of France declared its support for the movement. The communiqué issued by the Committee was followed by a series of pamphlets, proclaiming the sovereignty of the assemblies, denouncing the censorship carried out by manipulators, and spreading the slogans, “Destroy the University”, “Down with the Spectacular Market Economy”, “All Power to the Workers Councils”, etc. Then came the telegrams expressing solidarity with the workers. The counterattack of the leftists, and especially that of the Trotskyists of the FER, was ferocious. The convergence of the interests of the Trotskyists with those of UNEF, the CGT and the PCF, which were engaged in strenuous efforts to prevent any contact between students and workers, was complete. At the general assembly of May 17, using deceptive parliamentary ruses, they successfully prevented debate on the prerogatives of the Occupation Committee, so the latter abandoned the Sorbonne along with its supporters. The new Occupation Committee never submitted its decisions to debate by the assembly, but merely bypassed the latter. The bureaucrats had won their battle against autonomy, eliminating the first attempt at direct democracy.

A group composed of “enragés”, situationists, former members of the Anarchist International and sympathizers of the deposed Occupation Committee, about forty people in all, occupied the National Educational Institute on Rue d’Ulm and set to work, calling itself the Council for the Maintenance of the Occupations, the CMDO. It was not a permanent councilist organization, but an immediate response to the situation of general strike and factory occupations, and therefore of a temporary nature. Numerous strikers, delegates from the action committees and agitators from the provinces were showing up at the CMDO offices, and they managed to improvise an effective network to distribute the materials produced by the CMDO. The building façade was adorned with red and black flags. The first document debated in the CMDO assembly, published on May 19, was a “Report on the Occupation of the Sorbonne”. The second, “For the Power of the Workers Councils”, called attention to the crucial issue of the struggle that pitted the workers against the political and trade union bureaucracies, and outlined three possible solutions to the crisis: the continuation of the Gaullist government with the support of the PCF and the CGT in exchange for economic concessions; the formation of a “left-wing” government that was more capable of demobilizing the movement; and the victory of the proletariat that would entail the formation of Councils. On May 26, the Stalinists, the employers and the government signed a compromise agreement, known as the “Grenelle Agreements”, which stipulated

that the workers were to return to work in exchange for a substantial wage hike. The workers refused to ratify this agreement and in view of the Stalinists' wait-and-see attitude, De Gaulle, in a speech broadcast to the nation said that the choice was a new round of elections or civil war. The proletariat had no other option than to accept the Grenelle Agreements or take over the economy and freely reconstruct the social life of the country. Either defeat, or Council revolution. Too late. If, between May 16 and 30, in a single major factory, the workers were to have expelled the bureaucrats from the assembly, organized its self-defense and constituted a Workers Council, then a different rooster would have crowed. All that would have been necessary in that case would have been to issue an appeal to the other factories, contact their delegates, and act in unison. The occupations movement would have then been proceeding towards the final battle. This was more or less the core message of the "Address to All Workers" of May 30, signed jointly by the Enragés-SI Committee and the CMDO. Apart from these communiqués, which the striking print-shop workers produced by the thousands, the CMDO also printed and distributed about a dozen posters in black and white that would subsequently be extensively imitated, with the slogans, "Destroy the University", "Occupy the Factories", "What Can the Revolutionary Movement Do Now? Everything", along with false letters from the employers, more than fifty comics and a few songs like the "Song of the CMDO", copied from the Song of the Siege of Rochelle by the Stalinist Louis Aragon. In 1972 these songs would be recorded and distributed on vinyl, under the title, "To Put an End to Work. Songs of the Revolutionary Proletariat. Volume I".

State power had been on vacation for two weeks. After De Gaulle's speech, the ruling class mobilized and the supporters of order took to the streets. The conformist middle class breathed a sigh of relief. Reactionary France stood unanimously together to uphold the State and a pitiless wave of repression was unleashed. Right-wing figures close to power were prepared for executions. On June 6, the Stalinists succeeded in breaking the unanimity of the strikers by getting the bank employees and railroad workers to return to work. The workers at the Renault factory in Flins, who resisted the pressure of the CGT to return to work, were evicted from the factory by the CRS, the riot police, but soon reoccupied the factory. The CMDO issued a leaflet entitled, "It's Not Over!", which denounced the role played by the Stalinists in this affair. The trade unions gradually managed to convince the workers, exhausted and discouraged, to return to work, but not without constant demonstrations and clashes. On June 13, the government decreed the dissolution of various left-wing organizations. The Sorbonne and the other buildings were retaken by the

repressive forces of the State. On June 15 the CMDO dissolved. On June 18, the last striking factories were back to normal. The movement was over.

The CMDO disbanded when the wave of repression was imminent. It was every man for himself as the members of the CMDO abandoned the National Educational Institute. Their next rendezvous would be in Brussels. More than a dozen irregulars arrived there in trains, cars and buses, and some even traveled on foot. In Brussels they decided to document their testimony of what had been done and what needed to be done. In the last three weeks of July they collectively drafted, reviewed and corrected the book entitled, *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupations Movement*, a kind of memorandum that is still the best text on the action of the situationists in May '68, the culminating point of their intervention in history. The book, full of illustrations, was soon published by Gallimard under a pseudonym, and it enjoyed well-deserved success. The SI augmented its ranks with new members without any special gifts for theory, but who had demonstrated ample merits with respect to action. In the press, which had previously steered clear of the situationists, all kinds of crazy speculations about the SI appeared, truly idiotic statements, scornful commentaries, all sorts of lies, etc., and enough laughable nonsense to fill a book. The situationists were riding the crest of a wave, they were at the top rung of the revolutionary social ladder, which increased its audience, but which also fomented a certain amount of complacency and internal paralysis. Their theses circulated in a more or less truncated form, while the group repeated itself and did not advance beyond what they had already achieved. A whole year passed before issue No. 12 of the journal was published. Its first article, "The Beginning of an Era", was entirely devoted to a summary of the meaning of the May movement.

The text began with a description of the meaning of the victory of May, the first wildcat general strike in history, the verification of the revolutionary theory of our time and even, momentarily, its partial realization, in short, it was the greatest experience of a modern proletarian movement that arose everywhere. The proletarian nature of the movement was particularly emphasized, and the text goes to great lengths to prove that, except for its very beginning, it was never a student movement, despite the fact that the first radical outbursts had taken place in the universities. In any event, it was a *handicap* that the most advanced nucleus of the proletariat, unorganized and violent, could only express itself on the terrain of the students, at the barricades of the Latin Quarter, when the students were no longer a majority. The May movement meant the return of the proletariat as a "historical class", its second assault on class society. It believed it was making history and it felt that nothing would ever be the same again. It was the critique of all alienations, all ideologies, the



commodity, specialization, the parties... The rejection of work, of sacrifice, of authority, of the bureaucracy, of sociology, of the State... The most extensive manifestation of the desire for dialogue, of the taste for community and festival, of the liberation of customs... The affirmation of woman as the protagonist of her life. If the situationists had one merit, it was that of having predicted and veraciously asserted what would happen and what was happening. They knew how to read the anticipatory signs of a crisis that had little to do with the economy, and they had indicated the points where the lever of modern revolution had to be inserted. The most important thing to do now was to point out the mistakes and the weak points of the movement, which only partially and momentarily found its historical consciousness. It needed to generalize dialogue, which did not exist except in a fragmented form, within the separate assemblies. The trade union bureaucrats managed to control a wildcat strike that had resisted all their maneuvers to isolate each workplace, preventing radical elements from outside the factories from entering them. The workers could not express themselves directly, in their own name, since trade union mediation was always forewarned. While the Stalinists had allowed the strike to continue in a fragmented way, they also liquidated it piece by piece. In opposition to them, there was no direct coordination that would have made general agreements possible, nor were Workers Councils formed. Having started again from a very low level after half a century of defeats, without knowing its past or having any clear goals, with all its enemies well-equipped and deeply entrenched, the proletariat could not proceed beyond the spontaneous and dispersed phase. Its revolt had few chances of victory and the situationists did not propagate any false hopes in this respect.

The situationists not only insisted on the revolutionary will of the workers, although they never possessed the means to proclaim this publicly, they also did not hesitate to define May '68 as a revolution. Unfinished, incomplete, without having fully unfolded all its content, without explicitly laying claim to this title, but it was, when all is said and done, a revolution after all. It is true that the State was not overthrown, but the same can be said of other revolutions. Without going too far afield, we need only mention the case of the Spanish Revolution. The principal characteristic of a revolution is, on the one hand, the sufficient interruption of the economic and social order combined with the inability of the political powers to respond, and on the other hand, the radical transformation of conduct provoked by the eruption of new ideas about work and life, along with an appreciable number of radical innovations that put these ideas into practice. This is really what happened. If this is not convincing enough, however, the definitive proof was provided by the unprecedented

efforts mobilized by the Stalinists to defeat the occupations movement, a role that historically corresponds to the vanguard of the counterrevolution. The fact that they took a leading role in this regard from day one proves more than any other evidence that the May movement was a revolution.

New problems had to be addressed, problems that the situationists, closed off in themselves, would never pose. First of all, why the reign of normalcy was restored despite the sporadic, although increasingly more numerous, riots; and why the walls of bureaucratic containment remained so stable despite the obvious erosion of Stalinism. Why hadn't situationist theory, which was now so well known, become a sufficiently practical force? Or, to put it another way: why hadn't the proletariat manifestly appropriated the critique of modern society? Where were the sovereign rank and file assemblies and the councilist organizations? Later, there would be talk of the "reflux" of May, of a regression. Contrary to the assertions of the SI, the modernization of capitalism and the general proletarianization of the population that it entailed did not produce new, broader, and more intransigent forces of denial. The much-denigrated society of the spectacle and of consumption subjugated its antagonists by manipulating their desires and the satisfying false needs. Mercenary thinkers finished the job. In short, the society of commodity abundance was capable of deactivating the threats that its advent unleashed by preventing its contradictions from harming it in its essence. The split between the condition of the wage earning population and the class spirit became insuperable. The same fate befell the American "counterculture", the Portuguese "revolution of the carnations", the Spanish assembly movement, Italian autonomy, and Polish "Solidarity". Just like the other revolts, May '68 was not repeatable. Anyone who placed their hopes on its return would be disappointed. History does not repeat itself. The tasks that remain to be carried out so that the social question will once again emerge, were of too great a magnitude compared to the ones that the last of the Internationals, the Situationist International, had so effectively performed. No public or secret collective, however, capable of fulfilling these tasks could be formed.

Miguel Amorós, July 30, 2017.  
For La Linterna Sorda

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**"Los situacionistas y mayo del 68"**

September 2017

## The Period of Decline

*An assessment of the capitalist crisis  
based on the works of Jaime Semprun*

“Whoever looks at the world rationally will find that it in turn assumes a rational aspect; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship.”

Hegel, *Reason in History*.

During an era like the sixties and seventies of the past century that was open to every possibility for radical change, the greatest concern of its supporters revolved around the forms of its total realization. In many countries the time had come for revolutionary action and it was necessary to overcome, with subversive actions, the contradictions that were driving the old class society towards its doom. Here are some typical titles that issued from Jaime Semprun’s pen during those years: *The Social War in Portugal*; *Manuscript Found in Vitoria*; and *Considerations on the Current Situation in Poland*. It was a time of struggle, of the intelligent movement of the deployed social forces and therefore of tactics and strategy. The movement passed from theory to action; from the arms of critique to the critique of arms. The writings that most accurately reflect that period are those whose purpose was agitation and panoramic analysis, those that examined the developmental trends of the moment and assessed their potential. The truth, which had for so long been trapped in the carcass of the old world, fought towards the light and displayed all its amplitude and splendor, objectively and subjectively. It was implicitly accepted that the truth exists and that it was revolutionary. Everything was rapidly simplified and clarified. Opposites were dialectically reconciled, while the fragmentation and individualism typical of a dying epoch yielded before the unification and the universality of a period of iconoclasm. But what happened in the eighties, when the forces unleashed by the social crisis were incapable of overcoming the profound disarray occasioned by those unresolved contradictions?

Either the revolutionary subject was not strong enough and was defeated, or else it vacillated and retreated when faced with the immensity of its tasks until it finally disappeared. There was no new dawn to welcome. The revolution was no longer on the agenda. It was even accused of being the bearer of totalitarianism, and therefore undesirable on that account alone. The unifying impulse of the revolutionary cycle disappeared and the terms of the contradiction became

independent of each other. On the one side, the economy, the State, civilization, the countryside, the ruling class; on the other, society, the individual, nature, the metropolis, the ruled masses. The connections between them were severed. Subjectivity and objectivity, being and nothingness, body and soul, means and ends, affirmation and negation, were abruptly separated. It was the end of the happy totality of revolt and of the collective harmony of its protagonists. Recuperation, working on behalf of the memory industry, made the commodification of its fragments possible. This had repercussions in philosophy, art, culture, social critique, literature and politics, giving rise to an endless succession of substitutes for these domains. *The Handbook of Recuperation* [*Précis de récupération*] is a text whose purpose was to fight against this tendency. Utopias, ideals, and, finally, the very solidity of the modern world all came to an end. Mass individualism and a fully-furnished imprisonment in private life emerged victorious. Freedom became the freedom to consume and submission to the imperatives of consumption became habitual, repeated on a daily basis. The project of a universal community gave way to a juxtaposition of dehumanized atoms. Popular culture was drastically reduced to a purely utilitarian dimension. Language was impoverished and populated with technological and post-structuralist neologisms. Reality then became unintelligible and was enveloped in a fog of representations, all of which were incomplete and arbitrary, and therefore chimerical and false. The phantasmagoria that subsequently replaced reality have since then done nothing but cloud people's minds and render real life alien to human beings, since they cannot understand its rationality, because their gaze does not penetrate the surface of things, it goes no further than the contingent and remains fixed on external appearances, on the spectacle.

The transformation of the world in accordance with libertarian patterns was finally aborted in the eighties, forcing revolutionaries to retreat within themselves, a fate which only the most eminent figures of the movement tried to avoid by way of critical reflection. The owl of Minerva takes wing at dusk. Theoretical elaboration was therefore born from the recognition of failure, the failure of the social revolution, a failure which could not, however, be considered to be final. The prospect for revolutionary change was undermined, but the victory of domination resolved none of the essential contradictions; instead, it exacerbated them. Crises were therefore inevitable. The anti-nuclear movement, the youth of Tiananmen Square, the people of Soweto, the "Solidarnosc" of the Polish workers and the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, were signs of a healthy future. Critical thought only attempted to build bridges between the revolts of the past and those of the future. Its task was fleeting: it

tried to elaborate an up-to-date expression of the universal condemnation of the current state of affairs in order to escape from a labyrinth whose twists and turns were becoming far too prolonged. Theory was the tool with which these critics not only tried to explain the epoch for the purpose of surviving the moral poverty and the vapidness that characterized it, but with which they also aspired to once again reunite the latent forces of negation, the ones that stoked the fires of their cause with the fuel of dissatisfaction. This was the purpose, for example, of books like *The Nuclearization of the World* and the journal, *Encyclopédie des Nuisances*. Thus, theory by no means meant passivity or withdrawal: the door was always open to action regardless of its scale. Theory and practice were not opposed but were intended to be united in a reconstructed totality, but this unity was not attained, and to this very day it is far from being realized. It was not that those who made this attempt were on the wrong track, but rather that they yielded to optimism, put too much faith in the dissolving power of the truth and overestimated the negativity of the conflicts they witnessed: on the one hand, truth was relativized and ceased to have any effect on a world ruled by falsehood; on the other hand, negation was incapable of giving rise to a creative passion. The crisis also affected the workers movement and its ideals of emancipation. Capitalist society survived and was capable of effectively defending itself from the impact of scandals and revolutions by rendering a part of the working population, the main productive force, superfluous, thanks to new technologies. It was not that more and more workers were refusing to enter the labor market; rather, the labor market was rejecting more and more workers. The pressure of unemployment and the fear of exclusion inflicted as much harm as consumerist propaganda, which is why neither a universal consciousness nor, much less, a popular will, could take shape, or, to put it another way, the revolutionary subject, the forces of negation and affirmation, and the new combatant community of individuals who desired to freely organize their lives, were incapable of forming. The rules of the commodity and the ideology of progress still determined social relations both in everyday life, which was becoming increasingly more colonized, as well as in public life, which was becoming increasingly more professionalized. By way of the globalization of capitalism and the expansion of the new communications technologies, the spectacle penetrated so deeply into the social imaginary that it ended up completely replacing reality. As a result, irrationality contaminates all reasoning. And without rational thought, there is no real subject.

The human being can only achieve self-realization in a free society, but in contemporary society freedom is offered exclusively as spectacle, the no-where of the fictitious resolution of social contradictions. And as the spectacle of

politics, social life, culture and revolution, too, if the opportunity arises. And as the spectacle of self-realization, which is becoming less and less credible, insofar as the degree of frustration is now too high to be controlled with simulacra. In the interests of resolving the latter problem, “leftist” pseudo-happenings are quite effectively utilized by the system. Leftist ideologies are to the spectacle what critical thought is to revolt. They comprise the first step to spectacular submission. They perform the consolatory function that was in other times entrusted first to the Church and then to consumption: to make personal misery and the sensation of defeat bearable. Contemporary leftism is trying to indoctrinate various uprooted sectors, mainly the youth, to mobilize them in the name of abstractions, such as, for example, the working class, the people or the citizenry. It is not doing this in order to bring about a free society, without either Market or State, but to refurbish the neoliberal economy in such a way as to improve the deteriorated social status of these sectors. They call this the “transition to post-capitalism”. Despite the destruction of the working class milieu, the proliferation of civil servants and white collar employees, and the automation of industry, a vanguard minority still assigned a redemptive role to the industrial proletariat. Its analyses hardly took any account of the disintegration of class identity [*declasamiento*] and alienation, tendencies that are easily verified in the generalization among wage earners of a mentality that is identical to that of the middle class. In a world without meaning, the more absurd a theory is, the greater its impact. Most leftists, however, have in fact adapted their strategies to the stabilizing presence of this mass of philistine wage earners, which they call the “citizenry”. The “citizenry” arose as the imaginary subject of modern political change, occupying on the institutional terrain the central position that the working class left vacant when it lost its identity and its being. It affirms its existence by the act of voting, not by thinking and acting. The guiding principle of its existence is the right to vote, not the right to revolt. As a new universal class, its existence is not based on the scandal of inequality, alienation and oppression; it is instead founded on its capabilities with respect to elections and State power. It acts more like a lobby than like a class. It engages with reality by way of votes rather than demonstrations.

It is not customary to grant much importance to the key novelty of postmodern industrial civilization, i.e., the expulsion to the margins of society, without adequate material means, of an enormous number of people abandoned to psychological decline and misery. Right now, more than a billion poor people live in the peripheral slums of the major cities of the world. At this time, only the direct victims of the economy—peasants expelled from their land, people excluded from the labor market, temporary and part time workers, the

unemployed and the marginalized, debtors and the desperate, the undocumented and the homeless, refugees and displaced people, etc. — display any tendency to react violently against their inhuman material and spiritual situation, but they are in no condition to invent free activities that would lead them towards the revolutionary abolition of their situation. The ruling class is fully aware of this, for, although it is not at all afraid in the least of any prospect of this sub-proletariat being converted someday into the “reserve army” of a non-existent revolution that almost no one wants, it nonetheless makes use of its violence to legitimize the transformation from the “welfare” State to a penal “State”, thanks to longer sentencing guidelines, restrictive legislation and a police force with extensive powers and a high degree of impunity. It is definitely the case that the most profoundly harmed layers of the population have ceased to perform any function at all in the salvationist ideologies of postmodernism. The idea of conceding some kind of “basic income” to these layers of society, or of enlisting them in “cooperative” projects subsidized by the State for the purpose of reintegrating them into the world of consumption, is of neo-liberal inspiration. Leftists have for a long time now devoted all their attention to the new middle classes threatened by pauperization, classes whose conduct is more predictable and politically more profitable. The civil society movement represents the ideology of the end of the proletarian class as the doctrinal reference point. But what next for those who have been uprooted by globalization, the inhabitants of zones abandoned by the economy, strangers in a hostile, decomposing world, with neither hope nor future?

The result of the general process of deracination, a phenomenon that takes place in parallel with total proletarianization, is a disoriented, ignorant person, with neither norms nor values, indifferent to knowledge and understanding, frustrated and resentful, the enemy of everything and everybody. We are no longer dealing with a war of class against class, but a kind of war of all against all. At first glance this might not be so evident, but judging by the frenzy and hysteria that lie just beneath the surface of everyday reality, individuals seem like machines that are on the verge of exploding. Only fear holds them back, but not entirely. Class values—respect, loyalty, compassion, generosity, and above all, solidarity—are no longer practiced, so that riots of desperation have replaced general strikes, but without any cumulative effect at all. On the outskirts of the major cities, uprisings have continued to take place since 1981, the year of the Brixton Riots (and ever since August of 1965, if we include the race riots of Watts). The disturbances in the slum areas of the cities are purely destructive, given over to vandalism; they make no demands nor are they coordinated, they disseminate no slogans nor do they have spokespersons, they

are depoliticized, disorganized, without objectives. A spark of indignation sets them on fire and exhaustion or boredom puts them out. Such revolts lack consciousness, but possess more than enough motivation, which the State can make use of and even provoke if it needs a justification to augment its authoritarian machinery. Jaime was the first person to speak of this very real possibility of such a staged provocation in *The Abyss Repopulates Itself*. There would be no shortage of people who would view these movements—from afar, of course—as the return of the real proletariat, and there would even be people who would consider their monstrous defects in a positive light, but this is due to the fascination exercised by nothingness, re-christened as the permanent desire for insurrection, among the intellectualized urban youth, insubordinate but incapable of real rebellion. These new ideologues are not at all disturbed by ignorance and irrationality, they praise egoism, they make a clean slate of culture, they are ignorant of history and estheticize violence, the typical features not only of the uprooted individual of the slums, but also of the postmodern, solipsistic, normally integrated individual. They glorify confrontation with the forces of order and arson as the highest state of revolt. Of course, it is not exactly revolt, but the spectacle of chaos, total “deconstruction”. Reading such diatribes, one gets the impression that they are trying to obscure the crisis instead of explain it. Sophisticated and apocalyptic rhetoric, often seasoned with off-the-shelf timeless truths, selected quotations and historical allusions in the style of the “Invisible Committee”, do not change the obscure nature of their alarmist visions. By abolishing, with various degrees of skill, the past, memory, objective truth and thought itself, they abolish contradiction, the tension between antagonistic positions, the content of real life and the meaning of the struggle. Everything takes place in the framework of a rigid linear perspective that tries to give meaning to the proliferation of disconnected, and artificially unleashed, acts of violence. Nothingness, like death, is liberating in its own way. If truth does not exist, reality does not exist, either: all speculations are permitted, and the more catastrophist, the better. As Nietzsche said: “it is precisely facts that do not exist, only interpretations.” This kind of reasoning is so perfectly suited to domination that it is entirely legitimate to ask whether it was not actually the product of domination. The discourse of power, which has its own lexicon, is not essentially different. Therefore, the discourse of revolt must not put all its eggs in the basket of absolute negativity; this is a lesson learned from the past. The happy days of the revolution will never return unless a considerable mass of the population decides to live in a different way and situates itself negatively and positively—and therefore dialectically—outside of the status quo. Is this what is happening, however?



Capitalism, in the late stage of globalization, has abolished all communitarian bonds, autonomous cultures, sociability, collective practices, group identities, etc., stripping individuals of any direct and profound relation with their kind and their environment, and instead setting them at odds. Postmodern man, privileged or marginalized, is a psychological pauper, an unfeeling narcissist with an absolute lack of empathy; when you strip away the appearances and his function is terminated, when face to face with himself he really has nothing but loneliness and emptiness. The most widely-verified social experience in the technological world colonized by the commodity is that of absence and nothingness. This is what alienation is like during the period of decline. Most people try to escape, whether by demanding more security in order to plunge even deeper into a wretched private life, largely virtual and based on a flashy and affected pseudo-individualism [*friki* — derived from the English word, “freak”], or else by resorting to carefully constructed, and therefore fictitious, identities, seeking refuge, as people did in the past, in ideologies or religions. The times are favorable for both militant escapism and schizophrenia (the two were already connected by Gabel), for both false consciousness as well as for psychopathological reactions against a society that is viewed as a foreign and hostile environment. The doors are equally open to both the opportunity to enclose ourselves in an air-conditioned shell and the opportunity to throw ourselves off a cliff. The WHO calculates that 3% of the world’s population suffers from mental illness (Reich would call it the emotional plague), that is, 160 million people. Surely the percentage is higher, twice that or even more. Frustration has made such inroads that a considerable number of people refuse to accommodate themselves to a degrading and predictable life and throw themselves head-first towards death, attacking the first people who cross their paths, the unwilling cast of extras in their outbursts. Panic disorders, anxiety and depression foster unconditional submission, cocooning and the solitary suicide, but rage and resentment lead to psychosis, criminal violence and fantasies of mass extermination. And these pathologies are not exclusively restricted to one specific class or sub-class: the attraction of the abyss is almost the only aspect of this declining civilization that can be considered to be universal. The frequent cases of armed young people from wealthy families who upload their pathological ruminations on various social networking websites and even record videos of the murders they perpetrate on their smart phones minutes before committing suicide or being gunned down by the police, constitute a good example of just how far the revenge fantasies and existential anxieties of unbalanced nihilists can go when they depart from their bubbles of privacy. This observation is quite banal, yet very pertinent. Under the current

psychopathological conditions, it is even natural. The social fabric is being unraveled, modern times have reached their consummation and the “abyss” is being repopulated, as Jaime Semprun said, but with people from every class. Suicidal extremism is presently associated with Islam, but we must not deceive ourselves, it is not the Koran that inspires the jihadists of the European ghettos, but anomie, delusional thinking, the feeling of power and the fetishism of weapons. These factors have been at play for quite some time now. The same contempt for life and the same cult of death lie behind the conduct of the co-pilot of Germanwings Flight 9525 and the Norwegian ultra-rightist responsible for the massacre on the island of Utøya, the perpetrators of the Columbine shootings (which have been imitated on more than sixty occasions) and Latin American gangsters and hit-men.

The population under global capitalism has lost its way and does not possess any clear guides for conduct by which it could orient itself: the models provided by the middle class are proving to be less satisfying in this regard with each passing day. The prevailing conditions are psychopathological, albeit in a tolerable way for their subjects: under the sway of the Narcissus complex, the enemy is always other people. The lumpen volunteers of the Islamic State are thus not an extreme case of a lethal fundamentalism that blames all the “infidels” for the oppression of an alleged Moslem people (another abstraction), but merely one more among so many other instances of this very secular aberration of globalized capitalism: nihilism. Islam has nothing to do with it; the Internet, however, does. Its role is far too important to ignore and we can now refer to comprehensive studies of its impact — in the works of Olivier Roy, for example. The crisis of culture is the result of the complete elimination of subjectivity (of the Freudian ego), values, direct communication and the inner life (referred to by Derrida as “metaphysics”), the consequence of the absolute rule of the economy and of the unilateral appropriation of scientific and technical knowledge by its executives. Paradoxically, the progressivism of the leaders of this society and the scientism of its experts have plunged humanity into the pit of irrationalism, an achievement that is celebrated as a philosophical victory by all postmodern thinkers. But the irrational is not real, instrumental knowledge is not culture and science is not the only way to apprehend reality. Moreover, material progress ultimately entails profound ethical regression. Techno-scientific objectivism and economic rationality do not lead to a human way of life, but only to mechanized survival. When knowledge has been displaced from real life, that is, from culture properly speaking — when the universal human being has been liquidated and replaced by the isolated, robotic and intersectionalized individual — then nothing has any value and nothing

matters. Nihilism permeates the inhuman lifestyle of these new times. Others will point to irrationality or barbarism. We are not only immersed in a global social crisis, but in a crisis of civilization, both in its Western and Eastern forms. There is no clash between cultures, there is a generalized dissolution of all of them. At the culminating point of globalization, so many alterations have taken place in everyday life, and so much disorder has been fostered in people's minds, that the regulatory and moderating ethics of social behavior have disappeared everywhere, from North to South and from East to West, transforming global society into a planetary factory producing mentally ill individuals, many of whom are out of control and in positions of power. We should recall with respect to this last observation that, since the rise to power of the military in Argentina and Chile and the eruption of drug trafficking on a vast scale, torture, assassination and disappearance have become routine forms of governance.

Capitalist globalization is its own worst enemy. It fears neither conflicts nor crises, which are always inevitable insofar as their causes are constantly proliferating, but only the uncontrollable character of the evil that it has itself fostered (including wars), because it provokes divisions within its own ranks and undermines its own foundations; this is why its propaganda features so much catastrophism. Disaster management is based on the search for arguments with which the bad outcomes of its own operations can be explained and its disastrous decisions can be justified. And wherever you look, by cloaking a portion of the prevailing nihilism under the Islamic veil, the latter provides the ideal pretext for the creation of a global security State, the instrument with which this absurd world's leaders will attempt to prevent its collapse, even at the price of literally sacrificing a large number of their subjects. The security services are now in the front ranks of the columns of demonstrators protesting against terrorism. Generalized social control and the domestic application of wartime laws regarding enemy combatants are so much more easily justified by the proliferation of spontaneous and solitary jihadists—"terrorists"—than by the alarmist propaganda concerning social decomposition, based until recently on crime, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and the activities of anti-system idealists. "Enemies" are fundamental for the stability of a globalized society that is so easily susceptible to unforeseeable catastrophes. We must repeat, however, that the real enemies of humanity, the nihilists of an irresponsible and demented elite, now occupy the most crucial positions of power. Unfortunately, the insurrection still lies in the distant future; anti-capitalist skirmishes are too weak, and too restricted to small minorities, they possess scant resources and are largely rejected by a population that is for the most part conformist and

frightened. Furthermore, they are burdened by the dead weight of civil society reformism and illusory convivial formulas such as “responsible” consumer networks, “time” banks and “social” currencies. Just as we must be unyielding with respect to the prevailing chaos, we must also be cruel towards these excessively optimistic assessments, which respond to nothing but self-deception, activist bluff and the demagogy of an improvised civil society leadership. Most of the people who get involved in such projects feel a sense of panic in the face of the evils towards which the collapse of the social structure is dragging them, or towards the repression that might be unleashed by actions that are too radical, which is why they prefer to close their eyes to the obvious: the fact that no significant territory can function outside of capitalist norms and compete with the “system” without the latter noticing it. Nonetheless, despite all the partial victories that the system can claim to its credit, and no matter how much dread the prospect of its downfall inspires in the mass of citizens, capitalism harbors colossal contradictions that irremediably condemn it to death. The frantic race of economic growth has irreversibly dislocated society, globalized corruption, unleashed wars and given rise to dictatorships, and will undoubtedly end up ravaging the planet.

The revolutionaries of the sixties and seventies underestimated the capacity for survival of the capitalist regime, but they were not mistaken in their diagnosis. The fact that the critical minorities of that era were incapable of transmitting their views to a broader public, does not obviate the circumstance that the degree of dissatisfaction is increasing and that lucid protest can reappear and spread if an idea of another way of life — a crystallization of historical consciousness — can take root in a large enough part of the population where those who have been left behind are well-represented. Shortages and hunger can contribute to this development, but they are not the determining factors. Naturally, survival is the highest priority, but the impossibility of satisfying even the most minimal moral necessities that inform the community spirit is the principal element of revolt. This was true of the proletarian revolutions of the past and this is what can once again characterize the struggles in defense of territory, the only struggles that are currently replete with vital content and a capacity for idealism. The reconstruction of community bonds and the return of reason is still on the horizon of possibilities, but without any guarantees, since sufficient means of self-defense are lacking. Resignation is presently predominant, and careerists, predators and the mentally ill are numerous, but there cannot be the slightest doubt that the statist-market society is destined for the scrap yard. This is the only prediction that can really be made without any risk of being disproven. Of course, this does

not imply the automatic triumph of the libertarian cause, for it might in fact signify the contrary — the State might emerge victorious, or nihilist barbarism might prevail — but we cannot entirely rule out the victory of freedom. There is still a lot of thread on the spool. History never stops and a period of darkness can be followed by an era of light.

Miguel Amorós.

Notes for a presentation of Jaime Semprun's *The Abyss Repopulates Itself*, delivered at the Gijon Anarchist Book Fair on September 8, 2017.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“La fase crepuscular”**

## Miguel Amorós and Tomás Ibañez on the Catalanian Crisis

### Untimely Perplexities

When we see changes as drastic as those that have taken place in Catalonia since the big demonstrations of May 15, 2011, it is hard not to experience a certain degree of perplexity.

What could have happened that caused some of the most combative sectors of Catalanian society to undergo the transition from “besieging the Catalanian *Parlament*” in the summer of 2011, to wanting to defend the government institutions of Catalonia in September 2017?

What could have happened that made these sectors, which once confronted the *mossos d'escuadra* in the Plaza Catalunya, and sought to hold them accountable for their savage crimes, such as the crimes against Esther Quintana and Andrés Benítez, now applaud their presence in the streets and express their fear that they might not enjoy complete autonomy in law enforcement?

What could have happened to make parts of these same sectors, which once denounced the Catalanian *Govern* for its anti-social policies, to vote only a short while ago in favor of its budget?

But we must also ask, what could have happened to make certain sectors of anarcho-syndicalism, which once asserted that freedom has never been attained by voting, now want to defend this civil right?

The list of questions could be extended *ad infinitum* and we could provide numerous responses to the few that we have mentioned here. We could refer to factors such as the exhaustion of the cycle of '78, the economic crisis with its corresponding cutbacks and part-time jobs, the right-wing government in power in Spain with its authoritarian policies and its hostility to civil liberties, the scandalous corruption of the majority party, etc., etc.

It seems to me, however, that it would be naive to exclude from this list of responses one fact that must also be taken into account, the extraordinary increase in nationalist feeling. An increase that, without any doubt at all, has contributed to the factors referred to above but which has also been fueled by the structures of the Catalanian government itself, through its control of

Catalonian public television. Several years of persistent excitation of nationalist fervor could only have significant effects on subjectivity, and all the more so insofar as the strategies to expand the base of pro-independence Catalanian nationalism have been, and still are, extraordinarily clever. The power of a narrative constructed on the basis of the right to decide, based on the image of ballot boxes and the demand for the freedom to vote, was extraordinary and succeeded in perfectly dissimulating the fact that this whole narrative was promoted by a government apparatus.

Today, the *estelada* [the Catalanian flag] (red or blue) is, without the least doubt, the emotionally charged symbol behind which the masses are mobilized, and it is precisely this aspect that must not be underestimated by those who, although they are not nationalists, see the pro-referendum demonstrations as an opportunity that the libertarians must not fail to take advantage of in order to attempt to open up spaces for potential advances, and that revolutionaries, at least, as the bearers of a strong social agitation, should therefore plunge into the battle between the governments of Spain and Catalonia.

This fact must not be underestimated because when a movement of struggle includes a significant nationalist component, and this is, without the least doubt, the case in the present conflict, the possibilities for an emancipatory change of its character are strictly null.

I would like to share the optimism of the comrades who want to try to pry open some spaces in the current situation in order to create opportunities for emancipatory outcomes, but I cannot close my eyes to the evidence that popular insurrections and movements for social rights are never transversal, but always find the ruling classes circling their wagons on the other side of the barricades. At the same time, in processes involving self-determination, and the current movement is clearly of this type, a powerful inter-classist component always plays a part.

These processes always unite the exploited and the exploiters in pursuit of a goal that never involves the abolition of social inequalities. The result, corroborated by history, is that processes of national self-determination always end up reproducing class society, and subjugate the popular classes after they have provided the bulk of the cannon fodder in these conflicts.

This does not mean that we do not have to fight against the ruling nationalisms and seek to destroy them, but we must do so while constantly denouncing the ascendant nationalisms, instead of merging with them under the pretext that this joint struggle could give us opportunities to go beyond its own particular objectives and isolate those who are seeking to create a new

national State that they can control. No one should have any doubts about this: these fellow travelers will be the first to repress us when they don't need us anymore, and then we will have to be punished for snatching their chestnuts out of the fire.

Tomás Ibañez, Barcelona, September 26, 2017

## Letter to Tomás Ibañez

Alacant, September 27, 2017

Compañero Tomás,

Your “untimely perplexities” are the best example I have ever read of the common sense and revolutionary *seny* [Catalan: power of discernment] that must reign not only among libertarians, but among all those who want to abolish this society rather than manage it. It does seem odd to me, however, that a lot of people who claim to be anarchists have latched onto the nationalist movement and have enthusiastically proclaimed the right to decide the kind of material their chains will be made of: reminiscent of Ricardo Mella and “the law of numbers”! Nor is there any shortage of those who, in its time, jumped aboard the Podemos bandwagon, or rallied to Platformism, and exchanged the rags of the class struggle for the new clothes of civil society. The standard response of philistine anarchism to any historical dilemma is to opt for playing the game of established Power. The Spanish civil war is the most compelling example of this. Confusion, the irresistible attraction of a good brawl, the dissolution of class identity [*desclasamiento*], the tactic of the lesser evil, the enemy of my enemy, and so on. The final result: a mass of dumb rubes enslaved by one or another cause that is not their own, and a crowd of sick egos along the lines of Colau or Iglesias who are paid to sell themselves. In short, the horizon is obscured by black storm-clouds that prevent us from seeing clearly. Let us try to dissipate them.

The question that should be asked is not why a local sector of the ruling class has decided to resolve its differences with the State by means of mass demonstrations, but why a considerable number of people with entirely different interests, young people for the most part, are playing the part of movie extras and street brawlers for the caste that has turned Catalonia into its own patrimony, a caste that is just as Catholic, corrupt, authoritarian and class-bound as any other. The game of Catalanian patriotism is not that complicated, and those who promote it and are taking advantage of it have sought to conceal its meaning. The “Procès” has been an audacious class project. The



consolidation of a local caste associated with economic development required a qualitative leap in terms of autonomy that the “peix al cove” (“bird in the hand”) strategy was incapable of achieving. The refusal of the central plutocracy to engage in “dialogue”, that is, to transfer official responsibilities for decision-making, principally financial, hindered the rise of this caste and dangerously reduced its political influence and capacity in the eyes of certain employers, industrialists and bankers who were prepared to allow themselves to be led by pro-sovereignty elements in order to triple their profits. The high-level decision to opt for a “train wreck” signified a radical break with the compromise-oriented policies of political Catalanism. They were not really serious, that is, they never really intended to make a unilateral declaration of independence, since they only wanted to force the central government to come to the negotiating table on more favorable terms. However, since they had to pretend that they were really serious, they needed a well-oiled machinery of agitation to inoculate their schemes with a patriotic mystique that would keep the identitarian pot at a steady boil. And the mobilizations really took place. It was all a big spectacle. The demagogy of the *independentistas*, armed with the marketing of identity, was capable of extending its reach into the democratic civil society movement and this made it possible to flood the streets with masses of people who were too domesticated to do so on their own account. It skillfully pulled the strings of repressed emotions and gregarious feelings that are so at home in the slaves of consumption, that is, it was able to stir up the dregs of alienation to its own benefit. The objective, in my view, was attained, and the leadership caste of the State is much more willing to modify the post-Franco constitution in order to more effectively integrate the Catalanist caste, although in order to do so the latter will have to sacrifice a few figures along the way, maybe even Puigdemont himself. Powerful representatives of big capital (Feliipe González, for example) seem to be leaning in this direction.

Nationalism is being manipulated by con-men, but it is not in itself a con game. It is the sentimental reflection of a frustrating situation faced by most atomized subjectivities. It is not rational, since it is not the fruit of reason; it is more of a psychosis than it is the heartbeat of liberation. The explanation for the blossoming of patriotic emotion in Catalanian society must be sought in mass psychology, and for this purpose, Reich, Canetti or even Nietzsche will be more useful than theoreticians like Marx, Reclus or Pannekoek. The conviction and the enthusiasm of the crowd are not derived from cold logical reasoning or from rigorous socio-historical analyses; instead, they have more to do with the risk-free indulgence in emotional displays, the sense of power that is produced by vast crowds of people, the fetishism of the flag or other symbols, the virtual

Catalonian identity of the social networks, etc., all of which are characteristic of deracinated, atomized and déclassé masses, which are therefore also masses without values, goals or ideals of their own, masses predisposed to accommodate themselves to the millstones that are grinding them down. The everyday life colonized by the power of the commodity and the State is a life full of latent and internalized conflicts charged with an excess of energy that causes them to take the form of individual or collective neuroses. Nationalism, regardless of its particular reference, offers an excellent mechanism for channeling these impulses that, if they were to become conscious, might otherwise constitute a major factor of revolt.

Nationalism divides society into two paranoid gangs that are artificially opposed to one another because of their obsessions. Material, moral, cultural, etc., interests, do not count. It has nothing to do with justice, liberty, equality or universal emancipation. The Catalonian people is just as abstract a concept as the Spanish people, it is an entity that serves as an alibi for the sovereignty of a caste with its own notably repressive police force. A people is only defined as opposed to all power that does not emanate from it or which is separate from it. Therefore, a people with a State is not a people. You will agree with me that history is made by the common people by way of assemblies and institutions born from assemblies, but the way things are now, history is made by those who manipulate it most effectively. What these people are doing now is providing the popular backdrop for a bad play in which an ordinary redistribution of power is being publicly screened. Anyone can make their calculations and then navigate on that basis within or without the nationalist waters, now tossed by a rather mild tempest, but they will never be able to lose sight of the heart of the question.

Faternally,

Miquel Amorós

September 27, 2017

Thank you, Miguel.

As you once said to me, perhaps we can still be useful by clarifying a few things. The truth is that, considering the confusion that prevails in so many respects, you were not so far off the mark.

An embrace for you,

Tomás

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

## Interview by Rubén Martín for *El Informador*

According to Amorós, many of the changes that are supposedly taking place, only seem to be taking place. For this anarchist theoretician, society is confronted by a situation that requires the dismantling of the entire capitalist system in order to create new ways of relating to one another.

Listening to and reading the works of the libertarian thinker Miguel Amorós, allow direct access to the most lucid and radical critical thought; the experience is like being on the receiving end of a hail of hammer blows against beliefs and assumptions that purport to question modern society. Amorós repeatedly dismantles positions that claim to be critical of capitalism: sustainable development, de-growth, the alternative based on the workers movement, not to speak of the “civil society” platforms or the weak thought that arose from postmodernism—none of them, according to him, leads to a way out of the capitalist catastrophe. Modern capitalist society is a machine that produces harmful phenomena from which it is only possible to escape by dismantling the whole system and creating other social relations.

Amorós says that a subversive movement capable of bringing about revolutionary changes must have an anti-development, anti-state, de-industrializing and autonomous orientation. The big cities must undergo de-urbanization; the contemporary metropolis is a territory that produces “accumulations of solitary masses” who want security, but are incapable of winning freedom. The subjects of this possible revolutionary transformation will no longer be the working class masses and their allies, but those who have been marginalized by the State and capital, as well as the traditional peasantry and the indigenous communities of the world.

The critique that Amorós offers is a total critique of capitalist modernity, and this critique has its roots in libertarian thought, in the unorthodox theoreticians of the left, in the contributions of those who are critical of the capitalist technological system, in the Situationist International, and particularly in his own past and his participation in the struggles of the Spanish workers during the late 1970s, as well as in the anti-nuclear and environmentalist movements; the synthesis of these factors took shape in the Encyclopedia of Nuisances

collective, in which Amorós participated with Jaime Semprun, among other militant thinkers, during the early 1980s.

The ideas of this Spanish anarchist historian and militant, who was born in Alcoy, Alicante, in 1949, fell like seeds on fertile soil when Amorós visited Guadalajara this past November, under the auspices of the Cátedra Jorge Alonso, co-sponsored by the University of Guadalajara and CIESAS [Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social — Center for Advanced Studies and Research in Social Anthropology]. His most recent book, *Contra la nocividad. Anarquismo, antidesarrollismo, revolución* [Against Nuisances. Anarchism, Anti-Development, Revolution], was published by Grietas Editores, affiliated with the Centro Social Ruptura of Guadalajara, on the occasion of his visit.

\*\*\*

**Rubén Martín:** *You have said that we live in a world dominated by the crisis of “industrial-development oriented society”. How is this crisis manifested?*

**Miguel Amorós:** In the latest phase, the crisis is global; it is manifested on every level: it is an economic crisis, an energy crisis, an environmental crisis, a demographic crisis, a crisis of culture, a political crisis.... That is, it is a multifarious crisis. It has various facets. It is generalized.

**RM:** *You have also said that modern capitalist society has become a producer of things that are harmful. Could you elaborate on this?*

**MA:** Look, the alleged benefit conferred by the commodity always has another side, its concealed harmful effect, and harmfulness is always the dark side of the commodity. What happens is that, at a particular moment of capitalist development, the productive forces become destructive forces, or they are more destructive than productive, and this is when the harmfulness becomes manifest. Harmfulness was our translation of an English neologism adapted to French, *nuisance*, which means anything that is harmful, bothersome, irritating. Harmfulness means: the harmful effects on the natural environment, on the human personality, on the way we live together, on cities....

**RM:** *The destruction of social bonds...*

**MA:** Yes, that is a clear instance of harm; so is the bureaucratization of the world, the development of nuclear power, and especially everything that is harmful to our health. But ultimately harmfulness is a broad concept that was used precisely to characterize the principal feature of modern production.

**RM:** *What kinds of harmful conditions are produced by the modern capitalist mega-city?*

**MA:** The world we live in is in the process of becoming 100% urban, that is, the whole population is being concentrated in urban systems, in megalopolises. Like Shanghai. It's an enormous metropolitan region, no one knows where it ends; or Mexico City, or Tokyo, or Sao Paulo. The cities are constantly growing, they are no longer cities: they are non-cities, instead; the more or less collective kind of life that they once made possible has disappeared. More than ever before, they are gigantic machines that waste energy, squander food, and require an enormous supply network for everything; at the same time, however, they are the perfect places to conduct business. In global capitalism a city that has fewer than 100,000 inhabitants is not viable, economically it is a wreck. Then these small cities become satellites of other, larger, cities. You can no longer speak of a city within 40 kilometers of a metropolis, for example, here, in Guadalajara, let's take as an example, El Salto; look, it's a city in which the sociability that once existed, no longer exists, there is no social fabric. There is an accumulation of solitary masses. There is atomization, and along with atomization the typical psychological effects are produced: people get sick, the absence of communication gives rise to psychoses, neuroses, depression. There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of this kind of illness. And then there is industrial food: now we know what food additives contain, detergents, the new kinds of gasoline, the new fuels, because we breathe them, we eat them, and then we pay for it with cardiovascular disease and cancer. In the not-so-distant future almost everyone in the "developed" world will die of cancer, of a heart attack or from a stroke, when they don't die in car accidents or take their own lives. This is the death sentence that has been proclaimed against us.

**RM:** *And, because the cities are privileged spaces for accumulation and private profit, can they also be privileged spaces for emancipation and freedom?*

**MA:** No, the city as it currently exists cannot be a space of freedom. A space of freedom is a space that is capable of self-government, of exercising autonomy; its minimum condition is that the people who live in that space are acquainted with each other and interact with each other. This does not happen in a large city, but it was once true of the neighborhoods of the cities, and that is why the working class cannot be understood as a class unless one also takes into account its life in its various neighborhoods. Today, low-income neighborhoods still preserve a community spirit — even if it is strictly oriented towards survival, and not always. But, in general, the way people behave in a big city is totally anonymous and isolated. What is being produced is a lack of empathy, that is, a total indifference towards other people. If you see someone suffering, it makes no difference to you. You don't suffer with that other person. This is a new phenomenon. Human beings are characterized by humanity, and empathy was the form this humanity

assumed: when you see pain, you feel pity. Today the law of the jungle rules: it's not a class war, it's a war of all against all. This is not what happens in communities, quite the contrary, but this is just what is happening in today's cities. Not a hundred percent, and of course not to the same extent in Latin American cities as in European cities or as in Japan, where it is even worse. Phenomena associated with anomie of this type are becoming more widespread, more intense, and this makes a city that is, from the standpoint of physical and mental health, unviable. This sensation of suffocation, of loneliness, is not experienced in the rural areas, it is experienced in the cities.

**RM:** *Politically, this has an enormous impact, because this absence of empathy and bonds facilitates the work of domination.*

**MA:** That's right. Look, those who are lonely are afraid. They value security, not freedom. They only know a private, atomized life; they cannot even imagine a public, collective life that is really lived in common and is based on solidarity.

**RM:** *What do you think about the series of progressive governments in Latin America in the early 2000s?*

**MA:** Capitalist development was impossible under the traditional oligarchy; so these populist governments guaranteed the survival and development of capitalism, which they made compatible with a certain amount of investment in the welfare of the popular classes, which have been the beneficiaries, within capitalism, of more government social programs, financial assistance, education, healthcare, etc. The State and its social services were modernized to conform with the prevailing capitalist standards. The oligarchy could not have done this. This new autocratic caste, when it is in power, divides and controls the popular classes by co-opting their representatives, and then it becomes a civil service-technocratic caste, which is the leading caste of these progressive countries, oriented towards capitalist development, and which really lives on exports — like the others, the old oligarchy. But they aren't exporting coffee or beef: hell, they're exporting minerals, wood pulp, fuels, soybeans, etc. It is an extractivist caste that is playing the same role that the oligarchic bourgeoisie of the past once played, but, except for Venezuela, with better results. The political model of the old oligarchy had become obsolete, so this caste opted for this approach. This political caste furthered the modernization of Latin American capitalism.

**RM:** *In response to the failure of liberalism and of the orthodox/vanguardist left, purportedly civil-society oriented political tendencies have emerged. You have criticized them. Why?*

**MA:** The economic development promoted by extractivism (the intensive exploitation of the territory) increased the buying power of certain sectors of

the population; it eradicated — or mostly eradicated — hunger; it created, or actually expanded, the middle class. A middle class that, above all, was derived from the bureaucratization of the state, from the civil service, from the public employees of large enterprises and banks, etc. While this middle class accounts for between 30 and 35 percent of the working population in Latin America, in Europe it is 80 percent. Here the middle class is still small, it is still developing, and is on the side of the popular classes. This middle class is populist. It is not conservative, like its counterparts in France and Germany, for example. This middle class is leftist. Of course, its leftism is a lie. The middle class is never really leftist, it does not want any kind of revolution, it does not even want a profound change within the present system. What it wants is to preserve its level of buying power, so that it will not be affected by the current crises as it was by the mortgage crises, the crises of the real estate sector, and the bank crises in Europe. The solution based on neoliberal policies condemned these intermediate sectors to starvation, as in the time of the rise of the Nazis, when the impoverished middle classes formed the base of the fascist party. This is the base of the new social democratic parties, the ones that I call “civil society” parties, because they speak a language that has nothing to do with proletarian language, with classes, with socialism, with expropriation, with self-management: they don’t use that kind of language.

**RM:** *With respect to the case of Podemos, in Spain, you have said that “instead of changing everything, they have reinforced everything”. That is, they have instilled a breath of fresh air of legitimacy into the political system.*

**MA:** Yes, they criticized the system on television, but they have gone on to become part of that system and they are proving it. What Podemos is doing—and this is what Syriza [in Greece] is doing, and what the Portuguese left coalition and Mélenchon in France are doing—is striking poses and demobilizing. The core group of Podemos is Stalinist, but quite a few of its new militants are unemployed professionals who come from the neighborhood movements, the movement against evictions, activism “lite”, moderate environmentalism....

**RM:** *From the movement of May 15, 2011?*

**MA:** No, 15M was students protesting because they were going straight from school to the unemployment line. The protesters in 15M were complaining because the parties did not represent them, they wanted a party that would represent them. Podemos presented itself as their party, the party of the citizens, of those who prefer casting a vote to engaging in struggle, but all it did was to simply entrench itself in the pseudo-parliamentary regime, attracting all the

adventurers who were on the rebound from the other parties, including anarchists. Generally, they followed the course of accommodation. Now they have advanced from fighting against the political caste to fighting only against the right-wing party, the People's Party; now they are themselves part of the political caste.

**RM:** *What is the basis of radical critical thought in these grim times?*

**MA:** There is no shortage of ideas. We have a lot of ideas, not only the classics — Fourier, Mikhail Bakunin, Karl Marx, Peter Kropotkin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Landauer, Rosa Luxemburg, Anton Pannekoek, Karl Korsch, Georg Lukacs—there is a long list of anarchist, socialist and Marxist thinkers who have played a role, and I am not saying that all of their work is directly applicable today, but they have formed a part of this emancipatory thought, in a way, so to speak, that connected the working class with reality.

**RM:** *And the contradictions, the social conflict, the class struggle...*

**MA:** Sure, the contradictions and so on. When the social movement was in decline, thought did not disappear. It continued in two directions: one, artistic, by way of expressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, situationism (the last of the great vanguards); and on the side of sociological critique and philosophy, the Frankfurt School, Lewis Mumford and the whole American school of urban planning, Günther Anders and Walter Benjamin, philosophers and thinkers who have appeared, who have been concealed, and who are not classifiable in schools, like Jacques Ellul, who is very important for the analysis of technology and its function. We certainly possess enough theoretical resources to educate ourselves sufficiently. The problem is that these people are thinkers whose work remained isolated from a workers movement that was too weak to appropriate it and use it. A few anthropologists, like Marcel Mauss and Pierre Clastres, carried out major reevaluations of the experiences of the indigenous peoples. But what is lacking is a unitary view. These ideas evolved in isolated institutions, they were disconnected from the social movements. The social movements have been colonized by the obsolete ideas of a previous era: by doctrinaire anarchism, by Leninism, by Stalinism, by nationalism, ideologies that are dead but that force, that make the movements more pragmatic and also more sectarian when the time comes to define themselves.

**RM:** *A contemporary revolutionary project should no longer posit the working class as the central subject. "Today the worker is the basis of capital, not of its negation": these are your own words. What would a revolution look like? If such a thing is possible.*



**MA:** Look, I think that there are subversive elements; I won't say revolutionary elements, because there is no revolution without consciousness, and it will take a long time for the masses to arrive at a way of thinking that is presently far removed from them. What is lacking is the mediating organizations, debates, publications, speakers, journalists, writers; we still need educational thought, and, above all, we need readers and organizers who won't let themselves be bought. But it is clear that there are two factors that must be taken into account for the creation of a revolutionary subject that would take shape in a separate world within this world: those who have been excluded from the labor market, or the self-marginalized; those who, although they have not been excluded, abandon the labor market and choose to live on the margins; and the non-industrialized peasant classes. The traditional peasant classes, not just indigenous peoples, but also homesteaders or settlers, those who till land in common, or simply farmers, the landless, or those with land, with only a little land ... they are the fulcrum of the defense of the territory, the class struggle of the 21st century.

**RM:** *They are your revolutionary subjects, but what contents will a radical revolutionary project have at the present time?*

**MA:** I would use the word orientation, rather than contents. A revolutionary, anti-development movement must have a decolonizing orientation, it will have to be directed towards the locality, it will have to have an anti-statist, de-industrializing and autonomous orientation. That is, it must reinforce, during this phase, a horizontal, integral society in the sense that all activities will form part of a whole (politics, economics, education, culture...). Therefore horizontal, autonomous, integrated, fraternal, balanced, egalitarian, anti-patriarchal and decentralized.

**RM:** *Are you optimistic with respect to the possibilities of achieving these goals, despite the barbarism within which we are now immersed?*

**MA:** There are people who are optimistic. I am inclined to think that there are collectives that are susceptible to moving in this direction. Of course, when you talk about resettlement, de-industrializing, ruralizing or de-urbanizing in an abstract sense, it's hard to make yourself understood. And I don't say that the change will take place overnight, but simply point towards an orientation: we should move in the direction of reestablishing an equilibrium between the cities and the countryside, dismantling the urban agglomerations, industries, extensive distribution networks — this would imply alternative types of production and supply — means of mass communication, repressive and judicial apparatuses, administrative bodies... These are processes that are contrary to the prevailing dynamic, and they will take place during a period of

transition, because capitalism has destroyed so much, that rebuilding an equitable society in freedom, without a Market and without a State, will be a very costly endeavor.

Rubén Martín for *El Informador* (Guadalajara, Mexico).

Interview published online on March 1, 2018

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Entrevista de Rubén Martín para *El Informador*”**

## The Veins of Latin America Are More Open Than Ever

“The abyss does not stop us:  
when the water is falling over the precipice  
it is most beautiful.”

Ricardo Flores Magón

In the present stage of capitalist globalization, the territory is undergoing a violent re-adaptation on a world scale. The immediate victim of the abrupt acceleration of economic activity is the territory. Not only is it subjected to large-scale infrastructure projects and intensive urbanization, but, more generally, it is becoming the source of industrially exploitable resources and therefore the indispensable driver of the economy. As a result, its residents are confronted by the complete destruction of their habitat and their way of life. In a predominantly financial economy, the territory is nothing but capital, which entails the disappearance from its environs of any activity that is not subordinate to private economic profit. Not even life itself, whether public or private, is ruled by collective necessities, but by the interests of the political-economic elite that is expropriating the territory's resources. The territory is being transformed into a kind of diffuse factory that tends to function like a modern business, with high technology and a small labor force, reproducing social antagonisms at the highest level in the form of environmental problems, ecological crises, resource depletion, the forced relocation of populations and, in the countries with large and vital traditional agricultural sectors, these issues incorporated into the battle over the agrarian question by their peasant classes; these are novel aspects that make it possible to present the social question more veraciously. Theoretical critique must keep this in mind if it wants to avoid idealism and dogmatism.

The territory has become the principal means of production; extractivism is nothing but the capitalist reflection of this reality. The financial-industrial order cannot impose its rule without the massive exploitation of the territory in the form of multiple development programs. Postmodern consumer society would not be what it is today without bulldozers and tunnel boring machines. The construction of highways, ports, dams and fish farms, nuclear power plants, wind farms and photovoltaic installations, prospecting for minerals, natural gas

and petroleum, monoculture croplands, industrial reforestation and bio-fuel plantations, mass tourism, etc., are some illustrative examples of the new development-oriented phase bound up with the consolidation of the global market. “Extractivism” is a political neologism used to refer to the pillaging of the territory. National governments, modeled according to its requirements and led by a powerful class that takes advantage of the situation to enhance its power and profit, do not hesitate to sacrifice the territory, deport its inhabitants, eliminate its culture, devastate the environment, contaminate the soil, air and water, and endanger the health and threaten the very survival of all. Extractivism characterizes a particularly obsessive and addictive stage of productivist and consumerist society, features that constitute the ideological core of the thought of the ruling class. Nothing matters to the extractivist mentality except short-term economic profit; long-term consequences are not its concern. As a result, entire regions are mutilated and carved into pieces by infrastructure projects that are implemented in accordance with the requirements of the market, while the impoverished populations flee from the ravaged countryside to crowd together in the pestilential outskirts of the megacities, where they are exposed to, and imitate, the domestication of the urban masses in systematic consumption. “Development” is development by and for others, the oligarchy, its intermediaries and the beneficiaries of its patronage networks, and corresponds to an artificial, atomized, harmful way of life, subject to planned obsolescence.

During the last twenty years, the elites of the Latin American countries have eagerly adopted economic plans that prioritize the export of raw materials — primarily food, wood pulp, minerals, bio-fuels and hydrocarbons — favoring foreign investment and paving the way for the penetration of multinational corporations. They have embraced a kind of worldwide partition of the territory in order to rapidly overcome the various stages of industrial backwardness of their countries and to profitably insert themselves into the global Market. The territory has been carved up into zones, divided according to its productive specializations based on development plans elaborated in the big cities. What is particularly striking about this trend was that many of its protagonists do not belong to the traditional ruling classes, but to “left-wing” parties and coalitions that were calling for state regulation of extractive industries. The growth of the state apparatus is another common characteristic of today’s capitalist system, hardly affected by a neoliberal orthodoxy that is never put into practice, as it is a source of much-sought after jobs. If there is one thing that characterizes the stage of globalization it is the fusion of the State and Capital. State and Capital are the two sides of the same coin, just like politics and economics. The leftists

rose to political power with promises of social justice, the eradication of poverty, political rights, participation of excluded majorities, protection of nature, and, of course, national “development”. Therefore they had to try to make their environmental and social programs compatible with the usual economic dependence and export-oriented nature of their respective countries, that is, they had to promote extractivism and socialize its profits. They had to harmonize the pillaging and devastation of the territory with plans for economic aid, education, health care and jobs, all implemented in such a way as to benefit the loyal and satisfied members of political patronage networks. The rise in the price of raw materials on the world market gave them vast sums of money and contributed to the convergence of the various national governments with the big corporations engaged in resource extraction, thus consolidating the new progressive-extractivist caste, which is more than ready to sacrifice as many zones of “Mother Earth” as are needed to maintain the flow of capital that keeps it in power. In fact, the statist-export operation was crowned with success, making possible a gradual increase in consumer welfare, as measured by the number of cars, televisions, computers, jobs created, units of housing built, pensions, credit, subsidies, university appointments and medical insurance. As the “philanthropic ogre” grew, which is what Octavio Paz called the State, it was transformed into a business, with the concomitant “left-wing” corruption. The indisputable achievements in the fight against poverty that are responsible for an increase in a capacity for popular consumption that parallels the capacity of the extraction of resources, the authentic embodiment of Progress and “modernization”, have fostered bribery and corruption, coopted militants from the social movements, increased dependence on big capital and technology, lowered the level of social commitment and deprived individuals, groups and collectives of all autonomy. Minor inconveniences for today, in the name of a better, more Americanized tomorrow. And therefore victories that entrench the desk-jockeys of the political-administrative bureaucracy and that foster the expansion of the most typical stabilizing element of the postmodern era produced by totalitarian technology and the steady decomposition of the human condition: the wage-earning middle class.

The new middle classes, composed for the most part of civil servants, white collar employees and professionals, owe their expansion to the tertiarization of the economy and the extension of the State bureaucracy. Their status is not due to their ownership of their means of production as was the case with the classic petit-bourgeoisie, but rather to their academic training that is both technical and ideological. The occupational spectrum comprised by these classes includes, among other professions, consultants, management, advertising, information

services, elaboration and transmission of the ruling ideology, etc. The increase in the number of students is a better index of their social rise than the number of mobile phones “per capita”. These classes comprise more or less one-third of the population [in Latin America], less than half of their corresponding share of the population in Europe, Japan and the United States, where they are the most numerous classes. Due to their origins and social situations, the intermediate layers of wage-earners with college degrees, involved in unproductive labor, compose a relatively enlightened, technophilic, pro-development, pragmatic and liberal urban class. This class has a moderate mentality, tending towards accommodation with authority, and is not at all disposed to engage in conflict, prioritizing security above freedom when the stability of the institutions upon which its prosperity depends is in danger. As long as its capacity for consumption is maintained, or, as the economists say, “as long as domestic demand is maintained”, their private lives will be more important than their public lives, but when this class is adversely affected by free trade agreements or by economic crises it will bestir itself from its slumber and contaminate the social movements, spearheading political initiatives that will take the form of new fronts and alliances. These classes are not characterized by their anti-capitalism, although they avow such convictions for electoral reasons; their goal is obviously not the emancipation of exploited humanity, or a free society of free producers, or much less the abolition of the State. Their goal is much more prosaic: the bailout of their own class, i.e., rescuing it from the fate of proletarianization by political-administrative means. In short, what distinguishes the revolt of the middle classes from the revolt of the peasants and proletarians is the former’s demand for profound political changes and its utter lack of interest in promoting social changes of any kind.

Questioning the nature of the State was a characteristic of the classes that sought to destroy every form of separate power. This is not the case with the civil society parties that represent the new middle class: their sacred dogma is that every social conflict has a political solution within the State. Thanks to their participation, the parliamentary regime will put the country back on track. The extended partiocracy will rectify the historical mistakes of the old political system and will resolve all crises. For the civil society movement, the social struggle is relegated to a secondary level, and this outlook therefore constitutes a factor promoting confusion, demobilization and the disintegration of class identity on a vast scale, insofar as it is not criticized and denounced by an authentically subversive movement. The tradition on which these civil society parties are based is Leninist because they pursue power and worship hierarchy, although they do not practice the conspiratorial methods of messianic

sectarianism. They are the parties par excellence of the back-room deal: their weapons are electoral tactics, media posturing and political candidates, which are typically social democratic, all blended with a variably patriotic, folksy or charismatic rhetoric. They are not focused on agitation, but on “dialogue”: they want to negotiate, not riot. They are openly reformist; they do not want to abolish capitalism, but manage it. They promise that the economy, productivity and raw material exports would all prosper under their rule. They are Keynesians; they do not want a bureaucratic State capitalism, but a bureaucratic State that would reinvest part of the profits of capitalism in the preservation and extension of the middle class both in the mega-cities and the rural areas. They are therefore the modern incarnation of the myth of the “civilized” State, the paternalist State that is accessible to their candidates. Or, to put it another way: the State that mediates between the dangerous classes—the proletariat of the slums and the traditional peasantry—and the rationality of the Market. In a way, the populist States of Correa, Evo, Ollanta, Lula de Silva, Mújica and Bachelet. The current mission of the Latin American State, however, is only temporarily one of mediation, and whenever it springs into action it is visibly revealed to be the armed tentacle of the interests of transnational corporations. The wage-earning middle class then looks the other way because, although it is not the majority class in Latin America, its political weight is greater than in the other countries of the world and its interests are beginning to merge with those of international trade: its parties and fronts have had a taste of power, they have walked on the red carpet and they have hobnobbed with world leaders, and, as if this were not bad enough, their successful reinforcement of the partiocracy has become a model for civil society movements all over the world.

The official workers movement has long been integrated into the system. In the past, economic exploitation provoked revolt in a chaotic labor market and a proletariat that was hostile to bourgeois values. Now, need no longer obliges the proletariat to demand a new society. Its praxis does not lead it to autonomy. As long as labor output does not decline, wages guarantee a certain amount of acquisitive power and public expenditures maintain social services, the behavior of the wage earning masses will never be either seditious or radical. Their way of life flows submissively in the channels of domination. The mechanisms of social control are vigilant and are responsible for making sure this remains the case. Violent antagonism then shifts to the margins of the capitalist regime: the greatest contradiction is no longer the surplus value appropriated by the exploiting class, but social exclusion. The principal protagonists of the historical drama are no longer those who exist within the labor market and pitifully stagger along the paths of alienation, but the expelled, the dissidents and all

those who resist entering or operating within the circuit of the commodity: those who situate themselves outside the “system” as enemies and outlaws. The way that they express their views on the social terrain is new, spontaneous, plural, creative and based on assemblies. Despite the obstacles mentioned above, protest needs to be articulated and defended, which is why it must learn how to name its adversaries, especially those within its own ranks, the old and discredited left, the new-style civil society movements and the populist factions. As for its enemies outside of its movement, the oligarchs of industry and finance, the neoliberal plutocracy, the big landowners, the executives working for the multinationals, etc., it already knows them well enough. Thus, this advanced protest will not be able to avoid this internal struggle, and only by bringing it to a successful conclusion can it confront the ruling classes with any chance for success. Then, it will be able to express the truth that it contains and its cause will be able to be transformed into the cause of all the oppressed. It will overflow the local boundaries that once limited it, it will leave its particularism behind and will be an example for the world.

The series of “Earth Summits”, beginning with the one held in Rio de Janeiro, have taken on the mission of reconciling economic growth and extractivism with the devastation of the territory, dissimulating the latter behind formulas for environmental investment. They are laying the first bricks in the wall of a “green” capitalism based on “sustainable development” and an “energy transition”, which is equivalent to making the destruction of the natural and rural environment a source of profits by way of the creation of a market for ecological degradation. De-carbonization, restoration of parts of the countryside for tourism, controlled pollution, recycling, the desalinization of sea water, GMOs, the renewable energy industry, etc., are glaring examples of this qualitative leap towards the barbarism of the “sustainable” economy. However, wherever the brutality of development projects cannot be successfully dissimulated under the glittering mask of sustainability, conflict spreads. The green economy is more suited to industrialized countries without any real peasants. In Latin America, where the rural population is very large and even constitutes a majority of the population in many countries, the extractivist side of the market is clearly manifested in an unprecedented demand for territory. Eventually, an avalanche of new highways, tunnels, pipelines, tourism, plantations, mines, reservoirs, waste dumps and all the rest, precipitates a war against the peasantry, which is forced to mobilize for resistance and participate in self-defense and self-government. Numerous popular assemblies, indigenous communities, “circles”, “rounds”, defense committees, pickets and neighborhood movements, which coexist with other citizens’ organizations that



operate in a legalistic and vertical framework, form part of the multiple experiences of organization improvised to respond to the urgent needs imposed by the struggle against the privatization or the nationalization of the territory, in a struggle to preserve their identities and their cultures, which are in danger of being standardized, depopulated and commodified. The way they see it, man belongs to the land, rather than the land belonging to man, and this principle determines a lifestyle that is incompatible with capitalist development, whether or not it is “extractivist”. These widely-shared concerns have now affected the urban zones. Now that the territory has obtained an increasingly greater economic and political importance, the nature of power and classes is defined from now on in relation to the territory. The revolutionary subject seems to be taking form around its defense, somewhat like the new class struggle in conditions of accelerated capitalism, which in a way is a mark of historical continuity: the peasant classes have always been present in every revolution on the continent, confronting power in their demands for land and autonomy. Thus, the history of the struggle for land has been, and still is, the history of the agrarian communities.

If repression is focused on traditional rural areas, for the most part the areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, this is due to the fact that they are immune to capitalism, and also to the fact that they can remove themselves from the sphere of the State. The Amerindians are a paradigmatic example of a society without conflict, coercion or violence, where labor is not sanctified, nor is power desired, and where social relations are reinforced instead. A society of equals, without hierarchy, with strong roots in the land, concerned with their patrimony, governed by a regime of reciprocity, outside the market, functioning autonomously, with hardly any interference from the established order. A society whose way of life is based on mutual obligations and revolves around ceremonies and festivals, the moments of the rejuvenation of communal bonds. In a non-individualist type of society, alien to private profit, the economy is a subordinate activity that obeys communal norms established by custom. Personal enrichment has no place in it, and is by no means the goal of exchange, since wealth is not conceived as an accumulation of goods, but as an abundance of relations. Outside of games, competition is therefore incomprehensible. It is not our intention to idealize a society based on tradition and customary law, or to return to pre-capitalist eras, but even a brief study of the topic already shows us collective practices of animal husbandry, gathering wild plants, irrigation, hunting, fishing and agriculture that are exemplary insofar as they display the balanced exploitation of common resources. They show the inhabitants of the mega-cities that there are better alternatives to State control, nationalization,

the privatization and sale of the territory, industrial food, the money economy, etc., and that a moral, solidarity-based, integrated economy is possible, an economy that would make it possible for society to be free and egalitarian, in equilibrium and without a State, de-urbanized and without a market. The active sympathy awakened by indigenous society among urban rebels has a dialectical repercussion on the former by enabling it to surpass its localism and orient itself towards universalist goals.

Along with the fact that they are a source of positive lessons, the best example set by the peasant communities is the extraordinary resistance mounted by the latter against the aggression of the agents of Progress and their repressive forces. The degree of ungovernability they display is all the more surprising in view of the fact that the State never hesitates to resort to terrorist procedures; peasant recalcitrance, in turn, has become a powerful stimulant for urban revolts. Assemblies, demonstrations, vigils, marches, highway blockades, barricades and occupations are tools that are simultaneously defensive and sociable, and have demonstrated an efficacy superior to conventional political methods in the neutralization of enemy forces and the peaceful deterrence of their destructive plans. It is clear that nothing can be achieved without the participation of the uprooted and vulnerable urban masses, the most numerous elements, which is why we must constantly build bridges between the countryside and the city, especially when freedom proceeds hand in hand with the disarmament of the State and with ruralization. The mega-city cannot be reduced to human dimensions, or, more accurately, the cities can never be what they once were, projects of self-governed life in common, without the recreation of urban communities of struggle, but the latter cannot be consolidated without the support of a peasant revolution. In the countries where the peasant classes have not yet been defeated by capitalism such a revolution is possible.

Miguel Amorós.

Part One of a presentation delivered at the “Seminario de Pensamiento crítico, Revolución de la vida cotidiana y Organización autogestiva integral” [Seminar on Critical Thought, the Revolution of Everyday Life and Integral Self-Managed Organization], held at the Cátedra Jorge Alonso and the Centro Social Ruptura on November 15 and 16, 2017 in Guadalajara, Jalisco (Mexico).

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

## The Pitfalls of the Social Economy

“In this volume I want to offer a methodology by which  
to recognize means which have turned into ends.”

Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*.

At present, the automation of productive processes and of a good part of the service economy has generated a degree of structural unemployment whose growth cannot be contained. The greater the productivity, the greater the amount of labor power that must be disconnected, irreversibly, from the economic circuitry. Unemployment has a repercussion on the labor market by provoking a general decline of wages and undermines job security to such an extent that the usual means of damage control such as unemployment insurance, vocational training programs and economic assistance are overwhelmed. An abyss of exclusion is attracting a growing mass of workers who are being rendered superfluous and unnecessary by high technology. A useless labor force is accumulating on the margins of the productive system, a labor force whose management, given the aspect of a war economy that has been assumed by the market economy, has become problematic. Despite the disturbing scale of a problem that has no government or technical solution, there is nonetheless a solution that, far from threatening the stability of the capitalist regime, can, in a way, even reinforce its institutions. One of the typical properties of capitalism is its capacity to transform any reality into an economic phenomenon, whether a catastrophe, an environmental disaster or a war; consequently, nothing prevents exclusion from having its price, too, that is, it, too, should be susceptible to being transformed into a market and obtain a listing on the stock exchange. We are speaking of what they call the “Third Sector” in the United States, and in Europe, the “Social Economy”.

The social economy has nothing to do with socialism as it was conceived by Fourier or Cabet, nor does it have anything in common with the workers’ cooperative movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And it has nothing to do with the revolutionary collectives of the Spanish revolution, since the revolutionary motives of the third sector are conspicuous by their absence. Not to mention the uprisings of runaway slaves. These remote historical references do not have the purpose of emphasizing any kind of historical continuity where the past would illuminate and guide the future, but quite the contrary. Ideologues want to

disguise the prosaic nature of their social-economic projects with the heroic vestments of past epochs. The third sector is not the product of the class struggle, nor is it the fruit of any kind of communitarian will whatsoever; its roots are instead to be found in the initiatives of municipal or national authorities, often of a conservative tendency; or in those of wealthy philanthropists; or in the social doctrine of the churches and the projects sponsored by moderate or “company” trade unions. Their objectives have always been varied: helping the dispossessed class to survive, as in the programs encouraging urban agriculture during the two world wars or in the wake of the Spanish war; providing activity centers and occupational therapy for retired workers; agrarian development plans that are hindered by peasant traditions and the low level of productivity of small-scale land ownership; the construction of cheap housing in a context of the overdevelopment of working class neighborhoods; and finally, job creation, to compensate for the losses sustained by the labor force of enterprises victimized by restructuring plans. The contemporary direct relation between environmental crisis, unemployment and the social economy, however, is more indicative of an instinctive reflex reaction in the interests of self-preservation on the part of the impoverished middle classes under capitalist conditions that have entered the critical stage, rather than of the rebirth among the excluded of an inherited genetic predisposition related to the associative impulses of the millenarians. There is never so much talk of community, sovereignty, self-management and utopia as when they do not exist.

The matrix of the third sector is comprised in the Americas by the “Community Development Corporations”, born in the sixties of the last century from the desires of altruistic residents and the proposals of certain religious institutions. Their objective was to compensate for the deficiencies of social services and housing in impoverished neighborhoods that had been abandoned by the municipalities. After an initial phase of self-organization and grassroots work, these structures were institutionalized and obtained funds from aid programs, government and bank loans and private donations, and eventually became the administrators of numerous local development projects. They have become professionalized and function like universal business enterprises: they build houses and schools, they cultivate gardens that supply their own supermarkets, they run job training programs, and provide health care-related services for the elderly, and in the process create hundreds of jobs. And best of all, they generate profits<sup>34</sup>. At these levels, in areas affected by turbo-capitalism,

---

<sup>34</sup> Community Development Corporations are “nonprofit” corporations under U.S. law, and therefore do not generate “profits” in the technical sense of the word. However, like most other nonprofit

such organizations possess considerable assets and are responsible for between 6% and 7% of total employment, and have become a guarantee of efficacy for any social program sponsored by public initiative. On the other side of the Atlantic, cooperatives and mutual societies, narrowly-circumscribed circuits of exchange, popular credit programs, consumer groups and workshop collectives, play the same role. Although these “nonprofit” organizations, especially in Europe, like to characterize their activities as a transitional stage towards a humanized economy, as one more step on the road to the “post-market” era, they are instead an intermediate economy, “neither fish nor fowl”, devoted to guaranteeing the survival of the useless masses of the permanently unemployed that are continuously being produced by our “post-welfare state” capitalism. The role that is currently performed by the organizations of the third sector is similar to that performed by the trade unions in the previous phase of capitalism, when the labor market was still capable of being normalized. It is responsible for regulating the market of poverty and exclusion, maintaining poverty at endurable levels, a task that is no longer being successfully performed by government institutions. If labor is a commodity, or, to put it another way, if it can be bought and sold on the market, why should exclusion be any different? The low operating cost of philanthropic organizations is an evident fact, and the results can be quite noteworthy: it is likely that a retrained worker will be a good citizen, a better voter and an excellent consumer.

Nowadays, when capitalism has condemned part of the planet’s population to obsolescence by denying it jobs and sustenance, modestly self-management oriented activities within the system, regardless of their results, possess a great deal of propagandistic and ideological relevance for those who work within the “grey zone” of collaborationist interns. False consciousness exploits and restricts the horizon of even the most authentic attempts to attain autonomy, as is revealed by the enthusiastic and uncritical glorification of numerous isolated actions, ignoring the social and political conflict in which they are necessarily circumscribed. The denizens of this self-complacent ghetto did not repudiate the mediation of a new civil society caste that wants to profit politically from marginalization without really posing any kind of threat to the system. Its would-be government leaders affirm the possibility of a more just society, without the need for either radical changes or violent revolution. All we need is the Internet and the gradual application of cooperativist recipes to bring about the complete self-management of society within a reasonable timeframe. Simply

---

corporations they are managed by high-paid executives, and many CDCs have been plagued by corruption, accountability and patronage scandals. [American translator’s note.]

by peacefully and gradually displacing monopolies and the public sector from the center of economic activities, a center that will then be diligently occupied by the social economy thanks to the fact that it will be the beneficiary of the transfer of part of the profits of the private sector and state investments, a transfer arduously won in parliamentary battles. Thus, in the worldview of the left-wing lumpen-bourgeoisie, a particular form of bourgeois politics has been put on a pedestal, and the revolution is stashed away in the attic with other antiques, since it is no longer a matter of destroying capitalism, but of “transcending” it by way of negotiation between interest groups, the application of mutually accepted laws, and an agreed-upon system of taxation. It is not a question of socialism or communism, but of “post-capitalism”. As for the State, it is not even touched: the State is the indispensable instrument for the transition to “ecological democracy”, the tool that will facilitate our escape from capitalism, even while remaining within it.

What is immediately apparent in a complex world mired in crisis is the urgent need for an alternative, which for the civil society movement must be a simple alternative, easy to digest and transmit, without direct historical references and as far removed as possible from critical thought. It does not want to situate our era within history and explain it on the basis of its social antagonisms, because its purpose is not to clarify the field of battle, but to elaborate a mystifying discourse that serves as a disguise for the same old reformist practices of connivance with domination. Formulas of ecological-administrative stabilization of the economy, especially if they are condensed into catechisms, respond perfectly to this task. Superficial, mystical and holistic claptrap also makes its contribution. Thus, the prescriptions contained, for example, in municipalism, basic income, social currencies, “responsible” consumerism and tourism, the doctrine of de-growth and the credo of the “commons”, are ideal vehicles for “reorienting” the masses, fed up with so much alienation, towards frugality and equilibrium. As dogmas revealed by altruistic gurus, “observatories”, or “reflection groups”, they are most ideal, because they have an infallible answer and a magical solution for everything, dispensing with the need for the social struggle and rendering any idea of class differences completely superfluous. As potential practices suitable for institutionalization and for the “democratization” of fragments of the territory, they are most appropriate to serve as an example of “responsible” coexistence, or more accurately speaking, of self-righteous hypocrisy, inserted into the catastrophic world of the commodity.

The ideology of the “new commons” or the “global commons” is the only one among these currents that is rooted in clear historical antecedents, that is, the

administration of communal goods, remnants of which still exist, as emphasized by the Swedish economist Elinor Ostrom in her book, *Governing the Commons*. It is, however, the same social economy under another name, situated on typical “post-development” lines, which aspires to articulate its politics by way of the “new” institutions without questioning the party system in the least, and to recreate the communitarian “fabric” by way of “social markets”, “food hubs”, free software and the collective production of renewable energy. Very interesting experiments, such as, for example, de-schooling, de-medicalization, collective day-care and health care centers, will always remain in the Samaritan sphere of good intentions, since the level of community engagement required for their implementation cannot be sustained in the mercurial, constantly-changing conditions of marginal economies. The difference between these practices and the third sector lies in the fact that the proponents of the “new commons” do not directly confront exclusion, since they are more concerned with voluntary segregation from the market on the part of deserters from consumerism. The concept of the “commons” has been extended until it includes every horizontal and non-mercantile activity that can be categorized under the rubric of “civil society”, normally overseen by various officials and department heads of the big city governments, who are, in fact, its most influential advocates. It is these municipal officials who concede meeting halls, equipment and resources to neighborhood, youth, sports or cultural associations, but we must take it for granted that this is not done gratuitously, but in order to ensure the loyalty of a political clientele. Far from pursuing integral autonomy, the *biencomuneros* are calling for more involvement of the public powers, especially at a local and regional level. Reconnection with a way of life that observes the limits imposed by Nature does not appear to be incompatible with the presence of external, governmental, powers, nor does it seem to be too incompatible with the existence of business and corporate interests. From this point of view, employers, bankers and bureaucrats are legitimate “social actors” with whom the representatives of “civil society” must negotiate.

The municipal “urban commons” does not allow for the formation of social movements that promote a radical break with the system, movements capable of confronting the interests that are destroying the cities, because it does not incline towards real encounters, real debates and the planning of real actions. Municipal mediation prevents this from happening. But it does allow, for example, programs for a “new culture” for certain neighborhoods or even whole cities by convincing the municipal authorities of the need to declare a certain quantity of urban or undeveloped rural land to be off-limits for development. Or it can create “food councils” that unite producers, distributors, consumers

and municipal technical staff for the purpose of agreeing upon “logical approaches to responsible consumption”, the keystone of “food democracy”. For once, Engels was right when he said that democracy was the last hope of every reactionary cause. A similar process is underway in the rural areas, as the regional authorities serve as the main intermediaries for negotiations involving the business owners and our “democrats”, thanks to which protectionist strategies will be implemented in the form of land “banks”, contracts for territorial stewardship, charters for endangered landscapes and the founding of agrarian parklands. The grooming of municipal and territorial political candidates has now become the essential precondition for “economic democratization”, that is, for the real implantation of a circular cooperative system capable of helping to defray the costs of the basic needs of a considerable sector of the population in which the excluded are not relevant. The effective autonomy of the citizens involved in the use of the commons and the real efficacy of the above-mentioned strategies against industrial food and unbridled consumption, not to speak of their effectiveness against the suburbanization of the territory and the generalization of extractive industries, have yet to be displayed. It is evident that municipal governments and regional and national legislatures are not the convivial tools envisioned by Illich, accessible to all, as often as they desire and for ends that they desire like the assemblies, since in order to make use of them you have to organize a political campaign, participate in elections and pass legislation. From this circumstance we can deduce that this “democracy” with its philistine adjectives is not achieved by way of the defense of the territory or by any other kind of defensive struggle: the vapid speeches of the subsidized environmentalists, the professional “greens”, the advocates of the “new commons” and their de-growth cousins, do not make the slightest mention of struggles, as if the construction of highways, vacation resorts, vast plantations, reservoirs, airports, high speed trains and other useless projects did not exist.

Capitalism has become so unreformable that the appropriation of the currently-existing means of production would be useless for the construction of a free society based on solidarity. It would automatically reproduce the same type of society, with similar characteristics. Industrial society must be dismantled before it can be subjected to self-management. In another context we have already said that the anti-capitalist struggle requires a significant degree of segregation, and consequently, a serious ensemble of independent collective institutions. And we also said that the neighborhood and communal structures are infinitely superior to traditional organizations, parties, trade unions or councils, since the separation between the spheres of labor and everyday life has



become obsolete. The dimension of negativity contained in the struggle was not sufficient, and a transformative subject cannot emerge from such struggles without the further support of a positive network of communitarian experience, islands of resistance that harbor non-capitalist ways of coexistence. Such practical achievements show that life subjected to economic imperatives is not the lesser evil, and that one can subsist and even live outside of them. This is not, however, an appeal for marginalization, but for the preservation and extension of human relations in our surroundings. These achievements cannot by any means be created from scratch within a capitalist society with which they coexist, except in the form of very limited experiments in self-management on a tiny scale. The biggest mistake would be to consider them to be ends in themselves rather than means to an end, a mistake made by the proponents of social economy. They are not isolated objectives, totally disconnected from social conflicts, but weapons for intervention in these conflicts. The capacity to live *on the outside* will have the virtue, on the one hand, of rendering the reproduction of the dominant social relations more difficult by fostering sociability and inhibiting individualism; on the other hand, it provides a good logistical base for the defense of the territory. In order to transcend the boundaries of the enclave, however, that is, in order to be generalized, it needs to go on the offensive, and engage in a large-scale invasion of the spaces dominated by capital. A real revolution is necessary. This is the dilemma from which those who resort to a legal “assault on the base” [*asaltar los suelos*] in favor of a political and environmentally “sustainable” rectification of global capitalism are trying to escape.

Miguel Amorós

Part Two of a presentation delivered at the “Seminario de Pensamiento crítico, Revolución de la vida cotidiana y Organización autogestiva integral” [Seminar on Critical Thought, the Revolution of Everyday Life and Integral Self-Managed Organization], organized by the Cátedra Jorge Alonso and the Centro Social Ruptura on November 15 and 16, 2017, in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

## At the Cutting Edge of the French Disease

The theoretical regression occasioned by the disappearance of the classical workers movement allowed a strange philosophy to rise to a hegemonic position, the first philosophy that was not born of the love of truth, the primordial goal of knowledge. Weak thought (or postmodern philosophy) transforms this concept of truth into a relative concept, which it derives from a mixture of conventions, practices and customs that vary over time, something that is “constructed” and therefore artificial, without any foundation. And along with the truth, every rational idea of reality, nature, ethics, language, culture, memory, etc., is subjected to the same treatment. Furthermore, various authorities of the little world of postmodernism have not hesitated to define some of these ideas as “fascist”. Finally, recuperating Nietzsche, there is no truth, only interpretation. This systematic demolition of a way of thought that was born with the Enlightenment and proclaimed the constitution of freedom, and that, by giving rise to the modern class struggle, would also lead to social critique and revolutionary ideologies, therefore possesses, for those who, rather than bathing in the clear waters of authenticity, prefer to wallow in the mud of fraudulence — college professors and students for the most part — the appearance of a radical demystification carried out by inflammatory thinkers, whose goal would seem to be none other than the liberating chaos of the most extreme individuality, the proliferation of identities and the abolition of every norm of common behavior. On the day after this deconstructionist bacchanal, nothing of any value remains, nor is there any universal concept left standing: existence, reason, justice, equality, solidarity, community, humanity, revolution, emancipation... all of them would be stigmatized as “essentialist”, that is, as abominable sins “*pro natura*”. On the spiritual level, however, the negative extremism of the post-philosophers displays suspicious similarities with contemporary capitalism. A radicalism on such a scale stands in stark contrast not only with the political ideas and choices of its authors, some of whom are dyed-in-the-wool academics, while others are strictly conventional types, but is perfectly in accord with the current phase of capitalist globalization, characterized by the technological colonization of life, a perpetual present, anomie and the spectacle. It is a complementary doctrine for those for whom

life is easy. No one will disturb the professors of “post-truth” at their desks. And, thanks to the priority bestowed by domination upon instrumental thought, and consequently, thanks to the slight importance that dominant thought concedes to the “humanities”, various pseudo-transgressive bubbles and every kind of speculative doubletalk completely without relation to the surrounding reality have appeared, uncontested, in the universities, giving rise to a falsifying confusion in modern critical thought that enjoys an extensive noisy media accompaniment.

The postmodern praise of normative transgression corresponds to a certain degree with the disappearance of sociability in the urban conglomerations. In accordance with the new weakness in matters relating to philosophy, nothing is original, everything is constructed, and therefore everything teeters on a pedestal of clay. Political economy, classes, history, the social fabric, opinion ... everything. Therefore, if there is no valid social relation, or real collective liberation, or dialectic, or definitive criterion for judgment with respect to these things — what meaning do norms, means and ends have? They arise from nothing and end in nothing. This nihilism is very much in accordance with the nihilism of the market economy, since the latter grants no importance to anything that does not have economic value. This is why it should not seem strange that the eulogy for dehumanization and chaos that is so typical of the deconstructionists goes hand in hand with apologetics for technology and its world. Weak thought, among other things, celebrates the hybridization of man with machine. Is it not the case that a mechanical nature is superior, because it is so free of constraints, to human nature, which is the slave of natural laws? The nihilism inherent in mechanistic logic reflects and responds to the abolition of history, the evaporation of authenticity, the liquidation of classes and the apologetics for narcissistic individualism; it is therefore a product of late capitalist culture, if the latter can still be called a culture, and its function is none other than the promotion of ideological adaptation to the world of the commodity as the latter descends into chaos. In relation to what exists, postmodern philosophy is a philosophy of legitimization.

This philosophical trend that was born as a reaction to the revolt of May '68 — a revolt that emerged from “the underworld of the *Zeitgeist*” (Debord) — was welcomed in the American universities as the very paradigm of critical profundity, and from there “French Theory” spread to all the thought laboratories of capitalist society, descending into the juvenile ghettos in the form of a bold and radical intellectual fashion. Given its ambivalent and malleable character, the liquid syllogisms of postmodernism have found their place in the toolboxes of every variety of new-wave ideologist, both among the

most chameleon-like civil society activists, as well as among the most up-to-date anarchists conversant with the new trends. And there is even a new kind of anarchism, born from the breakdown of historical bourgeois values, based on subjective affirmation, an activism without goal or plan, and total amnesia, which has in most locations replaced the old ideal, born of reason, that originated in the class struggle and forged a universal ethics and whose revolutionary achievements were deeply anchored in history. In the *French Theory*, or, as it may be more felicitously denominated, the “*morbus gallicus*” [Latin: the French Disease — historically, syphilis], whose bastard offspring is post-anarchism, historical references have no place; they merely reveal nostalgia for the past, something that is very much to the discredit of any deconstructionist. The social question is dissolved in a multitude of questions relating to identity: questions of gender, sexual preference, age, religion, race, culture, nation, species, health, diet, etc., which are the focus of debate and give rise to a peculiar political correctness that takes the form of a tortured orthography and a discourse chock-full of hollow clichés and grammatical confusion. A sampler of fluctuating identities replaces the historical subject, people, social collective or class, its absolutist affirmation obviates the critique of exploitation and alienation and, as a result, an “intersectional” interplay of oppressed minorities replaces collective resistance to established power. Liberation is thus supposed to come from a playful transgression of the rules that shackle these identities and oppress these minorities, rather than from a global “alternative” or a revolutionary project of social change that includes every demand, something that is undoubtedly considered to be totalitarian, because once new rules are “constituted”, they will lead to more power and therefore to more oppression. Libertarian communism, viewed from this perspective, is nothing but a form of dictatorship. Critical analysis and anti-capitalism itself, thanks to the suppression of the past, and therefore thanks to ignorance, give way to the interrogation of norms, the contortion of language, and an obsession with difference, multiculturalism and individualism. And this does not lead to coherence, for the category of contradiction has been abolished, along with the categories of alienation, supersession and the totality. To construct or to deconstruct, that is the only question.

It is certainly true that the proletariat did not “realize” philosophy, as Marx, Korsch and the Situationist International desired, that is, it did not proceed from its emancipatory desires to practice, and today we are paying the price for its failure to do so. It is nonetheless also true that, in the development of the class struggle, a kind of critical thought arose that situated the working class at the heart of historical reality, and which was defined as Marxist, anarchist or

simply socialist. These tendencies entailed an attempt to grasp reality as precisely as possible, as a totality that unfolds in history, in order to thereby elaborate the strategies by means of which the class enemy could be defeated. It was assumed that the final victory was inscribed in history itself as a goal. The proletarian assaults on class society failed, however. And as capitalism overcame its crises, the postulates of proletarian critical thought were engulfed by contradictions, and new formulations were required. There were various attempts to satisfy this need and we do not have time to enumerate them here. All of them, however, were characterized by the clarity contributed by the perspective of the battles for liberation, but they were immersed in a context of retreat and defeat, and then gradually disconnected from practice. Reading them, however, reinforced the conviction that a free society is possible, that struggle is useful and that we must never give up, that solidarity among those who resist makes us stronger and education makes us more lucid... The struggles waged by minorities, far from dismantling social critique, helped to enrich it. Questions of identity, far from being secondary, acquired an increasingly greater importance as capitalism penetrated everyday life and destroyed traditional structures. Aspects of exploitation were denounced that had previously hardly been noticed at all. At first, the universal and identity converged; the solutions for racial segregation, sexual discrimination, patriarchy, etc., were not conceived separately, but from the perspective of a global revolutionary transformation. No one could imagine that black racism, a society of Amazons, a gay capitalism or a vegetarian dictatorship would be something to be desired. The social revolution was the only framework within which all questions could really be posed in all of their scope and resolved. Without the social revolution, there were only elitist specialization, the sectarianism of the ghetto, activist estheticism and stereotypical militancy. This was in fact the trail that was blazed by the postmodernists.

Weak thought also exploited the goldmine of the ideological crisis by recuperating authors and ideas, but with results and conclusions that were totally at variance with their original intentions and meanings. Once the revolutionary subject was neutralized in practice, it had to be abolished in theory, so that struggles would remain isolated, marginal and incomprehensible, enveloped in a cretinizing and self-referential verbalism suitable only for insiders and specialists. This was the mission of *French Theory*. There was a surge of sophistical and cryptic confusion that consecrated the intellectual caste as privileged sages and as the chosen people for the crowds of their followers, mostly university students and academics. The “*mal français*” [the “French Disease” — see above] was the first irrationalist philosophy

associated with a more or less well-paid administrative or bureaucratic lifestyle, and for good reason: its revision of the social critique of domination and its attack on the revolutionary idea performed magnificent services for the cause of domination. The idea of power as a ubiquitous atmospheric element that embraces everything, condemns every collective practice in favor of an ideal whose purpose is the renewal or reconstruction of this power as a kind of snake that eats its own tail. Power is not, it would seem, embodied in the State, Capital, or the Market, as it was when the proletariat was the potentially revolutionary class. Now, all of us are Power; it is everywhere and everything. The revolution is thus redefined as a decoy deployed by Power to rejuvenate itself in extreme situations, on the basis of new values and norms that are just as arbitrary as those that it had itself abandoned. The discrediting of the social revolution is very useful for real power in times of crisis, insofar as any organized subversive opposition that attempts to take shape (a social subject that tries to constitute itself) will immediately be denounced as an exclusionary power. In short, it will be denounced as an evil “narrative”, just like the class struggle. The rejection of the idea of class necessarily also takes the form of class hatred, the legacy of past domination that is operative in the post-rational imagination. Finally, all revolutionary and libertarian communist pretensions are nullified by gender fluidity, polyamory, transversalism and the vegan regimen. Once the individual problematic is resolved in this way and the common cause is definitely rejected, the way forward is then cleared for a collaborationist and participatory opposition, one that is ready to play the game and of course to vote, to occupy positions of power and to manage the prevailing order with a radically identity-oriented discourse, and, incidentally, a radically civil society-oriented discourse that is now so popular not only among the neo-leftists who have so recently become members of various government institutions, but also among the prematurely senile leftist youth who have been fully integrated into the system since their birth.

The critical horizon, a prisoner of the French Disease, is therefore horrifying, just like life in the Western urban world that is completely saturated by capitalism. It is the end of reason, the spiritual closure of a declining world where resistance to power was once possible, the evaporation of historical class consciousness, the apotheosis of relativism, the absolute triumph of fraudulence, the perfected reign of the spectacle... You can refer to this phenomenon by whatever name you like, but it is above all the intellectual effect of the historical defeat of the proletariat during the seventies and eighties, and therefore of the disappearance of two whole generations of social combatants and of their inability to transmit their experience and knowledge to subsequent generations, which could have inoculated the latter

against the postmodernist psychosis and its unintelligible jargon. There is a clear line of genealogical demarcation that more or less coincides with the appearance of the youth “milieu” or ghetto at the end of the eighties, and also with the relation of the latter to the process of gentrification of the downtown districts of the cities; and finally, one is altogether justified in positing a relation between the spread of the postmodern disease with the development of the new middle classes. The destruction of the revolutionary social movement and the catastrophe of theory are two aspects of the same disaster, and therefore of the double victory, practical and ideological, of capitalist, patriarchal and statist domination. Even so, the debacle is never total, because conflicts are proliferating at a much faster rate than identities, and the will to liberation in common is stronger than the narcissistic desire for individual success. Ten minutes of pathetic virtual fame are nothing in the storm-tossed sea of a permanent state of war. The class struggle reappears in the critique of the world of technology, in the struggle against aggressive machismo and in the defense of territory, in the community projects oriented towards going beyond capitalism and in the battles waged by small-scale farmers against industrial agriculture and the commodification of life. It is likely that in the turbo-capitalist countries these conflicts will not be susceptible to being pigeonholed as focal points of “intersectional” antagonisms, or “gender”-based issues, or other reductionist tags of identity, which are perfectly compatible with a reformist casuistry based in the “social economy”, but wherever an authentic front of mass struggle crystallizes, such trivialities will be turned against themselves and will be consumed in the flames of universality.

Miguel Amorós

Outline notes for presentations on anarchism and postmodernism held on November 14, 2017 at the Centro Social Ruptura, Guadalajara (Jalisco), and on November 25 at the Biblioteca Social Reconstruir, Mexico City.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“En proa al mal frances”**

## The Catalanian Affair

It is shocking, and even more so when viewed from afar, to see the pressure that the political oligarchy of Catalonia has been able to exert on the Spanish State, but what is really extraordinary is the popular support it generated, in part due to its own efforts, but also because of the simultaneous convergence of a certain number of factors that are favorable for the so-called “*procès*”. The Catalanian question is part and parcel of the crisis of the State. No one can be unaware of the fact that political Catalanism participated in the drafting of the post-Franco Spanish constitution and that it played a stabilizing role during the “transition” from the dictatorship to the system of amnesiac parties, facilitating on various occasions the “governability” of the State from which it now wants to separate. In exchange for these services, it obtained certain rewards. A web of political-economic interests crystallized around the Generalitat, the municipalities, the county governments and the other institutions of the autonomous region of Catalonia, responsive to the most powerful financial and commercial interests. The capitalist dynamism of Catalonia demands a considerable increase of local decision-making powers that is inconsistent with the centralist tendencies of the old monarchist State. Its supporters hoped for a redistribution of power in the form of a new “*Estatut*” of autonomy, affecting the control over the region’s infrastructure, and above all over its judicial and fiscal affairs. However, the decision announced by the Supreme Court in 2010, which in practice rescinded the promised Catalanian Magna Carta, dashed these hopes and was the signal for a radical change in the strategy of the Catalanian bourgeois oligarchy, which could not even deal with the debts incurred by the executive branch of the Generalitat. Having set itself the short-term goal of independence, it gained the support of all those sectors that could consider themselves harmed by the economic crisis, by the corrupt and authoritarian central government, by Spain’s reactionary right wing, by the Bourbon monarchy and by capitalist globalization: owners of small businesses and shopkeepers, the wage earning middle classes, government employees and members of the regional police forces, trade unionists, students, mayors, municipal councilmen and residents of small cities and agricultural towns, irredentist separatists, etc. There was a resurgence of a “Catalonian people”, prepared to obey the directives of its leaders transmitted to them by an effective apparatus of mobilization (the ANC, Omnium, TV3), always behaving



peacefully and civilly, in accordance with previously established guidelines that were broadcast in detail. By emphasizing the disdain of the Catalanian patriots for nationwide fronts, for general assemblies, for the *kale borroka* [Basque insurgency] and for wildcat strikes, nationalist propaganda succeeded in creating a world apart, peaceful, with its own symbolism, its heroic figures, its convivial image and its shared spaces, with a discourse, a people, victims and enemies made to measure. Appearing before an imposing demonstration of popular acquiescence, like those convoked by the executive branch of the Generalitat, the pro-sovereignty parliamentarians could present themselves as scrupulously compliant with the mandate granted to them by a well-trained population, which, far from meeting in assemblies to debate and constitute itself as such, put all its faith in its political leaders and its media directors.



Mossos (Catalonian regional police) for independence

The concept of a “people” is inherent in the concept of sovereignty, since the sovereign people is the source of a new legality, more “democratic” than state sovereignty. Therefore, the people engaged in struggle against Spanish

colonialism have the “right to decide”, that is, the right of self-determination, to secede from an oppressive state and to have their own government, preferentially a republic. As authentic “democrats”, interpreters of the popular will, the pro-sovereignty deputies voted for the new legal course of self-determination in order to subsequently participate in good-faith negotiations with the Spanish State, which, as was to be expected, was not willing to join such deliberations. This was the weak point of the pro-sovereignty strategy, which transformed the spectacle of separatism into a comedy. The end of the “*procès*” was not as heroic as the day of the referendum. After the big demonstrations against the repression, in which numerous Spanish loyalists also participated, and after the climax of the symbolic declaration of independence in the Catalanian *Parlament*, a simple government decree was sufficient to return everything to normal. It was not independence that was on the agenda, but “dialogue”. The heroic “people” stayed home watching television, while the interim managers appointed by the ministries of the central government occupied the local councils without the need for the intervention of a single agent of the public forces. The transfer of the headquarters of La Caixa and the Banc de Sabadell signaled a headlong flight of businesses that clearly revealed, along with a controlled fall in stock prices and a decline in tourism, the defection of the capitalist executives from the “*procès*”. This was the second mistake of the pro-sovereignty movement, i.e., the idea that they could be sure of capitalist support despite an initial slump in profits. The third mistake was the internationalization of the Catalanian cause. The pro-sovereignty forces played their last card quite well, that of seeking international “mediation”, but the diplomatic battle ended with the victory of the central government, since no State supported the “*procès*”. As in the game of snakes and ladders, the pro-sovereignty bloc landed back on square one, once again resorting to the obligatory victim narrative and internecine battles over the movement’s leadership, utilizing, as usual, Catalanian culture and frivolously accepting new elections for the autonomous region with the aggravating circumstance of having provoked the rise of a powerful Spanish loyalist movement. Did they really need to go to so much trouble for such meager results?

It is obvious that the Catalanian crisis was serious enough for the State to arrange for a different status for Catalonia under its jurisdiction, with greater autonomy, but it will not be the current pro-sovereignty elements who will negotiate this transformation. The enemy — the loyalist bloc — has emerged morally and electorally reinforced from this conflict. The urban working class masses, depoliticized by decades of social democracy and Stalinism, have become “constitutionalist” without knowing anything about the Constitution.

In the working class neighborhoods of the Barcelona metropolitan region, in the big cities, and all along the Mediterranean coast, Spanish flags are flying. As was so often the case in the past, the degree of sovereignty will be determined by the parties that are not in favor of sovereignty. It is an irony of history. It is also obvious that Catalonia will be ungovernable if any attempt is made to rule it without any concessions to the pro-sovereignty movement. The latter's many contradictions will not detract from its electoral support. If things have not turned out as planned—and while it is clear to those who have not been convinced by the official account of the meaning of the sovereignty movement that the “*procès*” was, more than anything else, a very cleverly staged farce—what might nonetheless seem strange but really is not at all odd is the fact that for most of its supporters none of this makes any difference. The pro-sovereignty movement was an excellent manipulator of emotions. Its followers wanted to hear exactly what their leaders told them, without worrying too much about the falsehoods or the demagoguery that the messages thus conveyed might contain. And this is still the case. Deception and truth are not distinguishable in a sentimental and hypnotic context, because nationalism is a faith and its goal lies in heaven above. What the masses wanted was catharsis and that is just what they got. The emotional discharge made possible by the enormous stage sets filled with crowds of extras was accomplished realistically enough, and in the end other, lesser discharges would take place in the upcoming ceremonies of a pure independence for which no one has to be sacrificed. This is what counts, not the truth.

The most disturbing aspect of the whole business is the fact that dissident minorities took the bait and confused what was a dispute between two factions of the ruling caste with a struggle for popular liberation. A vulgar redistribution of power was mistaken for a social conflict! Without the least hesitation they enlisted in an electoral mobilization that, even in the most generous interpretation, had no other intention than to constitute a State similar to the existing one, only on a smaller scale. A Little Spain [*Españita*], as the late Agustín García Calvo said. People who not so long ago were persecuted by the *Mossos* and insulted in the Catalanian *Parlament* were suddenly applauding the Catalanian forces of repression and were willing to risk their lives in defense of the voting stations set up by the executive branch of the Generalitat [the *Govern*], eager to participate in an inter-classist movement without questioning in the least its leadership and its goals. It is not easy to explain how nationalist clichés penetrated them so thoroughly, or what brought on such a pathological intellectual collapse on a mass scale, or how such widespread frustration could take such an irrational and trite political form. We are witnessing the funeral of

an era, that of reason, that of the conscious proletariat, that of the class struggle, and passions have been placed at the service of unreason. It is true that it has been some time since the autonomous workers movement disappeared, leaving in its wake the wreckage of a sense of class uprootedness and defeat. And it is even more true that social exclusion has not generated an anti-capitalist movement, not even at the most elementary level. The determinant factor in our current situation, however, is the politicization of the wage-earning middle classes, which were until recently the electoral base of the traditional parties, a phenomenon responsible for an abandonment of social questions in favor of the political struggle. The state- or anti-authoritarian socialism of the proletariat has been overshadowed by the civil society movement of the new middle classes, which are decidedly nationalist in Catalonia, and self-management has been sidelined by the “assault” on institutions. The end of the working class as a transformative social force has left the initiative to other, more socially conservative, Keynesian, profoundly statist classes, and, in the meantime, the rebel minorities, the libertarian ghetto, the alternative trade unions and the so-called social “movements” merely reflect the decline of class consciousness, the loss of memory, and the forgetting of the lessons of the past concerning the experiences of the false struggles of the middle classes and their politics.

The movement that displays the most abundant signs of decomposition is anarchism, which is hardly even the shadow of its former self. It has succumbed to every reactionary ideology and its disarray is so profound that nothing could have been expected from it but that it would serve as the pimp of sovereignty, the spearhead of vulgar trade unionism, the exponent of apocryphal identities and the mouthpiece of postmodernism. These roles will only serve as temporary stepping stones towards more highly paid activities, integrated into the dominant system, such as social economy, institutional environmentalism, civil society politics or populist nationalism. In the past, anarchism always existed in symbiosis with the workers movement, to which it contributed ideals, and often enough, courage. Any anarchist from that era would have said that nationalism was nothing but an attempt by the bourgeoisie to divide the proletariat; that the nationalist conflict was a false conflict (Madrid-Catalonia, central state-Catalonian people) whose purpose was to conceal the real conflict (bourgeoisie-proletariat); that the issue was not nationality, but anti-capitalism; that the real colonized and oppressed people were not the Catalonians, but the workers; that the workers have neither a fatherland nor a State. In the anarchist press of the past we easily find analyses of nationalism from a class point of view. And in practice, anarchists were frequently engaged in conflicts, often bloody ones, with nationalists. The line separating anarchism from nationalism was well-

defined, and this is what today's pro-sovereignty movement has succeeded in erasing. The pro-sovereignty movement, by setting itself up as the principal social and political force, has polarized society, obliging all the other forces to define themselves in relation to it, for or against, that is, to take sides. The pro-sovereignty caste is the only caste with an explicit project for a "State" and a "country", and this is why it was easy for it to outflank the civil society "left" and render it impotent. It knows what it does not want and where it wants to go, even if it does not have a very clear idea of how to get there. And while the genuine civil society movement tries to remain above all "blocs" with increasingly higher doses of ambiguity, most anarchists have jumped aboard the pro-sovereignty bandwagon with the fatuous hope of finding cracks in its edifice where they can promote their social causes and identity issues.

Anarchism has lost its "bond" with the workers, but it seems to have discovered a solid enough connection with nationalism. The rights of labor have joined forces with the liberty of peoples, and ballots have joined forces with direct action. Anarchism has converged with the Catalan Left in the Committees for the Defense of the Referendum, first, and then with the Committees for the Defense of the Republic, becoming esoteric and populist, since it defends an illusory "people" and fights on behalf of a phantom State. It is prepared to serve as the cannon fodder for the pro-sovereignty movement, that is, for a fraction of the bourgeoisie. The CNT and the CGT themselves have university professors serving as the general secretaries of their organizations; the *crème de la crème* of the citizenry direct these organizations that have nothing anarcho-syndicalist about them except their names. And the worst thing of all is that libertarian reformism and pro-sovereignty have not given rise to an extreme left that would seek to draw clarifying lines in the anarchist movement. The latter is not capable of such a thing, and is no longer capable of conceiving a social project that is clearly demarcated from the pro-sovereignty and civil society movements. It is not capable of constituting itself as a radical social current distinct from the other substitutes for such a current such as the CUP, Podemos or Los Comunes. The neo-anarchist ideology revolves around the concept of "the people", an idea borrowed from primitive bourgeois nationalism. "The people", however, is not a political subject, much less a class distinct from the bourgeoisie, a socially homogeneous and unified majority that fights for liberation and to construct a State that would guarantee its liberty. It is indeed true that there is no revolutionary subject, since there is no workers movement that could perform such a role. But there is no Catalan people, either; what is called by that name is only the product of the institutional propaganda of the pro-sovereignty movement, a submissive mass of voters

related to one another virtually through social networks and apps on their smart phones, rather than the manifestation of an independent will emanating from a collectivity that is conscious of its past, forged with direct relations and real common interests. In the final analysis, the Catalanian people is an entelechy by means of which the pro-sovereignty caste turns itself into a national class and constitutes itself as a nation, for which purpose it only lacks its own State. Patriotism is a statist religion. This is the reality that lies behind the alleged “sovereign people”: a public relations image, an abstraction that leads to other abstractions like “fatherland”, “nation”, “democracy” or “State”. A myth that allows a few clever social climbers to speak in its name and to claim its institutions as their own patrimony, for their own personal advancement. In a world of full-blown globalized capitalism, there are only exploiters and exploited, whether or not they are Catalonians, there are only a ruling class and the ruled classes; there are only leaders and led, oppressed masses and the State, and there is room only for nationalist false consciousness or revolutionary class consciousness, for narrow-minded patriotism or the universal ideals of emancipation. There is nothing to be expected from the fatherland but abstract liberties, ruled over by a privileged caste; real liberties will be the product of a class struggle prosecuted to its ultimate consequences.

From today’s real antagonisms, a new proletariat must arise that is inaccessible to ideological fashions, to the alien projects of other classes, to palace coups, to nationalist illusions. Despite some unexpected results, such as, for example, the decline in tourism, the real estate crash, and capital flight, for which we are sincerely grateful, social struggles must follow their own paths and display their difference. There are conflicts in which one must participate and others in which one must not. It is not about a war between flags, or a competition among the secondary manifestations of political phenomena. Nor is it a matter of putting together a populist salad with all the ingredients. It is a specific way of acting and a struggle to the death for ideas, typical of a revolutionary collectivity that is trying to take shape.

Miguel Amorós, December 20, 2017.

Text for a speech at a meeting of the Coordinadora Antiprivatización de la Sanidad (Madrid) [Coalition Against the Privatization of Health Services]

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“El asunto catalán”**

## Anatomy of a Scandal

Now that the integration of young people into the society of the spectacle is an obvious fact, when the substitutes for protest, often inspired by its most despicable sector, the universities, can hardly conceal the desire to incorporate their participants into the prosaic world of consumers, a scandal like that of Strasbourg tends to be interpreted as a large-scale esthetic operation, a kind of high-level *performance*, by means of which the Situationist International attained a preeminently artistic notoriety. Nothing could be further from the truth: it was “by no means a spectacular action, but a scandalous intervention carried out by enemies of the spectacle”<sup>35</sup>. The purpose of the scandal was to reveal the rejection of the standardized, servile and alienated lifestyle that was making inroads among the youth, by means of an unacceptable action against the educational institutions. It did not originate so much in the dissolution of a handful of bureaucratized student associations in precipitous decline, as in the opportunity to disseminate a radical critique of the living conditions within a developing commodity society. The main goal was therefore the publication of the “most scandalous pamphlet of the century”, but the circumstances that preceded its publication, and persisted for some time, were not merely incidental backdrops. We must not forget that the Strasbourg scandal was the precursor to a scandal on a much greater scale: the scandal of May ’68. As we delve into the details of its origins and subsequent development and attempt to shed some light on its little corner of history, we do not encounter a uniform group of clever intellectuals in complete lockstep with their associated team of young people who were eager to “practice theory” come hell or high water. Personality conflicts, a desire to have some fun, various states of mind, elective affinities, antipathies and resentments — in short, all kinds of differences and degrees of consciousness — played an important role in the whole affair, as we shall see, for, as someone once said, history is not made without passion, and therefore even the most rational intervention conceivable, the intervention whose goal is the revolution, is more the product of enthusiasms, longings and fits of passion than of cold calculation.

If everything has a beginning, the beginning to this story must be sought in the friendship struck up among a group of Henri Lefebvre’s students, Béchir Tlili,

---

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Debord to Hervé Vernay, December 26, 1966, *Correspondance*, Vol. 3, Fayard, 2003.

Mustapha Khayati, Jean Garnault and the brother and sister, Theo and Edith Frey, who shared “the same ideas and the same preoccupations”. They were impressed when they read the first installment of “Basic Banalities”, a text by Vaneigem that was published in the seventh issue of the journal, *Internationale Situationniste*. Béchir, who was enrolled in the PhD program in sociology, had obtained a copy of the journal for his comrades. He was personally acquainted with Debord, since he had worked with him in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, and had supported Debord’s criticisms of Castoriadis, the group’s Pope. As Khayati said, with respect to the group’s fascination with Vaneigem’s text, “we didn’t stop discussing it during our daily meetings in the cafeteria of the university restaurant, Gallia, called the ‘Minotaure’”<sup>36</sup>. The eighth issue of the journal came out in January 1963 and this small group of friends was then able to read the second part of “Basic Banalities”, and acquired a more in-depth understanding of the situationist critique. Béchir and Mustapha contacted Debord, as did other sympathizers over the course of the years 1963-1964, including the Englishman Sean Wilder, and André Bertrand, an anarchist involved with the Anarchist Federation. Daniel Joubert—former editor of the Bordeaux journal, *Critical Notes*—and Béchir Tlili were known at the University of Strasbourg as “the situationists”<sup>37</sup>, despite Debord’s mistrust of, and scorn for, Joubert. The Tunisians had other interests besides agitation in France, however: Mustapha, who had even fantasized about the formation of a *Maquis* in The Vosges mountains to support the Algerian insurrection<sup>38</sup>, had been in contact with the editors of *Perspectives tunisiennes*, a socialist publication directed by a handful of Tunisian students that was open to all “leftist” tendencies. On this question, Mustapha openly disagreed with Béchir. In August 1964, the ninth issue of *Internationale Situationniste* was published, which contained the article, “Correspondence with a Cybernetician”, a scathing critique of the professor Abraham Moles, a friend of Lefebvre’s. Debord had broken off relations with Lefebvre for various reasons: on the one hand, due to the discrepancies between the radicality demanded by their investigations on urbanism and everyday life, and the conformism of an academic lifestyle compounded from concessions; on the other hand, because of petty grudges. The ostensible reason was Lefebvre’s plagiarism of certain situationist theses on the Paris Commune, which the situationists denounced in a pamphlet<sup>39</sup>. Moles was scheduled to preside at a

---

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mustapha Khayati conducted by Gérard Berréby, Brussels, July 4, 2014, in *Rien n’est fini, tout commence*, by Gérard Berréby and Raoul Vaneigem, Allia, Paris, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Debord to B. Tlili, April 15, 1964, *Correspondance*, Vol. 2, Fayard, Paris, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> At least this is what Lefebvre claimed in an interview published in the catalog, *Figures de la négation, Avant-gardes du dépassement de l’art que faisait suite à l’exposition*, VV.AA., Paris Musées, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> “Aux poubelles de l’histoire!”, published in issue No. 12 of *Internationale Situationniste*.



conference at the university with the techno-artist Nicolas Schöffer, and for Debord this seemed to be a perfect opportunity for sabotage. This plan met with the enthusiastic approval of the Strasbourg group, except for Béchir, whose reservations about Mustapha's relations with the [Tunisian] "Perspectivists" led him to tacitly cut off relations with Khayati. Debord, however, who considered Béchir to be the representative of the SI in Strasbourg "simply in his capacity as a 'Marxist'", decided to set this problem aside and plunge ahead. Arrangements were made with Khayati and his comrades to print "Correspondence with a Cybernetician" as a separate pamphlet, along with another pamphlet signed by Khayati's group, for distribution on the day of the conference. Debord and Michèle Bernstein respectively suggested the titles, "Dialogue between the Robot and the Sign" (Moles being the Robot, and Schöffer the Sign), and "The Tortoise in the Showcase", since "the tortoise is the preeminently cybernetic animal, and the showcase is Schöffer's artistic ideal, and also a well-known vehicle for exhibiting prostitutes in Hamburg" <sup>40</sup>. On March 24, Moles' speech was interrupted by the distribution of the "Correspondence" and the "Tortoise" pamphlet signed by Theo, Edith, Jean and Mustapha. Debord was elated: "This is the tone to employ with these robots; it is necessary to worry them about the future; to insult them in the present on several selected occasions and not to enter into a too serious refutation of what isn't serious (on the theoretical level)." <sup>41</sup> After this incident, the Strasbourgers entered into a closer collaboration with the SI as soon as the opportunity to intervene in the Algerian crisis arose.

Debord had already considered approaching the Arab world through a critique of the authoritarian and bureaucratic populism of Ben Bella, which was responsible for the defeat of the Algerian revolution. Khayati came up with the idea of distributing a pamphlet at the Festival of Youth in Algiers. He discussed its possible contents with Debord, who said that "the main thing is to give the impression of a new revolutionary frame of reference that will extend its critique and encounter everywhere the *real movement that abolishes the existing conditions*, but which is still largely unaware of its goals and the choices they imply." <sup>42</sup> Boumedienne's successful June 19<sup>th</sup> coup d'état against Ben Bella, rather than aborting the plan to produce the pamphlet, only gave it some new contents. On June 30, thanks to Theo Frey's assistance in drafting the text, it was now ready for printing; the title adopted was "Address to the Revolutionaries of Algeria and of All Countries". An Algerian student, Nasri Boumechal, went to Algiers and distributed it through the mail in Algeria.

---

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Debord to M. Khayati, March 20, 1965, *Correspondance*, Vol. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Letter to M. Khayati, March 31, 1965.

<sup>42</sup> Letter to M. Khayati, June 7, 1965.

Debord and Garnault were trying to identify people in Europe who should receive the pamphlet by mail. The project's scope expanded, as the text of the "Address..." was intended to be published in pamphlet form in various languages. Theo and Edith attempted to translate it into German and Polish; meanwhile, an Argentinian artist was supposed to translate it into Spanish. By the summer of 1965, the Strasbourg group, after making the requisite trips to Paris and Brussels, was now part of the SI and was planning various contributions for the tenth issue of the journal. The Strasbourgers were invited to pursue their studies in the capital so they could collaborate more closely with the Parisian nucleus (Debord, Viénet, Bernstein). Garnault, at least, rented an apartment in Paris for a while. The translations proved to be difficult; the Arab version posed specific typographical problems; the Polish and Danish versions were never satisfactorily completed, but the German version turned out to be a success because the situationists could count on the assistance of a young German-speaking individual, Herbert Holl, who was familiar with the situationist theses. Garnault let Holl stay at his apartment temporarily while he was in Algiers, where he verified, *in situ*, the warm welcome that greeted the pamphlet. Khayati had also received positive reports. Far from constituting an obstacle to understanding, the SI's Marxist-Hegelian language "can be understood wherever conditions lead people to pose real revolutionary problems"<sup>43</sup>. In November, the pamphlet was ready for distribution, and an analytical text on the next stage of development of the new regime, "The Class Struggles in Algeria", written by Debord and Khayati, was also discussed; the latter text would be printed in the form of a poster one month later. The situation was favorable: Vaneigem had finished his *Traité de savoir-vivre...*, Debord was almost finished with his *Society of the Spectacle*, two new members had just joined the SI (the Romanian exile, Anton Hartstein, and Holl), and a new project was taking shape, a pamphlet in English celebrating the uprising in Watts, a neighborhood in southern Los Angeles inhabited by people of color, as an illustration of the social collapse of capitalism at its American pole. The title was inspired by Gibbon's masterpiece, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*<sup>44</sup>. At first, Sean Wilder, a subscriber to the journal, was asked to translate the text, but since he lived in Toulouse, the task was assigned to a bilingual Englishman living in Paris, Donald Nicholson-Smith. Finally, the Strasbourg group traveled to Paris to help finish drafting the texts for the tenth issue of the journal, and two Strasbourgers served on its editorial committee (Khayati and Frey). The tenth issue went on sale in March of 1966.

---

<sup>43</sup> Letter to M. Khayati, October 22, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy".

Union Nationale des Etudiants de France  
Association Fédérative Générale des Etudiants  
de Strasbourg

---

# DE LA MISERE EN MILIEU ETUDIANT

*considérée  
sous ses aspects économique, politique,  
psychologique, sexuel et notamment  
intellectuel  
et de quelques moyens pour y remédier.*

1966

Supplément spécial au N° 16 de «21-27 Etudiants de France»

The Strasbourg group fulfilled their obligations and the journal contained three of their articles, written on a reasonably high theoretical level. The texts by Theo ("Perspectives for a Generation") and Jean ("The Elementary Structures of Reification") clearly reflected their readings of Marx, Lukacs and the SI, as well as the yet-unpublished manuscripts of Debord and Vaneigem. Mustapha drafted an outline project for liberating words ("Captive Words. Preface to a Situationist Dictionary"). These texts undoubtedly served as a spur for the recent arrivals, Anton, Herbert and Donald, who plunged into reading without pause to attain "sufficient theoretical knowledge" and to confront the task of writing some of the entries for Khayati's situationist dictionary, or the further elaboration of some of the themes evoked by Vaneigem in his text, "Some Theoretical Topics That Need To Be Dealt With Without Academic Debate or Idle Speculation". Jean and Mustapha made plans to move to Paris. Everything was taking place in a congenial atmosphere characterized by shared goals, with solid analyses and exemplary interventions upon which those analyses were based. Even Herbert seemed to overcome his problems communicating with Debord. At the University of Strasbourg, meanwhile, all kinds of people were to be seen: Daniel Joubert, who had renounced his Christian faith; Sean Wilder, André Bertrand and René Fugler, well-known anarchists; and a whole gang of vaguely libertarian persons, whose sympathies extended from Stirner to Makhno and Durruti, by way of the Dadaists and Surrealists. They did not associate with the local situationists; when they came across them in the Minotaure cafeteria they ignored them, and the situationists treated them the same way. Fugler was not viewed with approval by the situationists, who accused him of not understanding, and distorting, their ideas; and they did not like Joubert, either.

When the autumn elections for AFGES were announced (General Federated Association of the Students of Strasbourg, the local branch of UNEF), some of Fugler's comrades along with a few other like-minded persons registered as candidates. They had no program but they clearly manifested their intention to criticize in acts the old student unionism<sup>45</sup>. It must be said that this student unionism was for the most part disregarded by the students. Of the 16,000 students at Strasbourg, only 350 were members of AFGES. Thus, on May 15, with all of 35 votes in their favor, five against and ten abstentions, a slate of six candidates was elected to lead AFGES (André Schneider, Bruno Vayr-Piova, Marlene Badener, Dominique Lambert, Roby Grunenwals and André Simon). Anxious lest these newly-elected officials should founder without any direction because of their lack of specific plans, Bertrand, who was in close contact with

---

<sup>45</sup> René Furth (Fugler), "Souvenirs d'un militant", *Le Monde libertaire*, No. 1411, June 25, 2006.

the victorious candidates, informed Debord of the “seizure of power” at the Strasbourg chapter of UNEF, which placed significant funds, facilities and other resources at the disposal of the new executive bureau of the local student union. In June, Bertrand and Sean met with Debord in Paris, at a café on the Place de Contrescarpe, to explain the affair in detail. Debord then suggested the possibility of publishing a scandalous text that would subject both the student milieu and class society to ridicule. A couple of weeks of meetings with the SI would suffice. Of course, Debord asked for a substantial sum of money for the situationists, for their “advisors” and their experts in demolition. He delegated Khayati and the other Strasbourg situationists to serve as mediators with those whom he referred to as the “neo-Strasbourgiers”.

At that time, the SI’s most pressing concern was to find a way to overcome its status as a vanguard by re-defining itself as a revolutionary organization, a stage in the radical critique destined to self-dissolution in the revolutionary movement as soon as the latter is unleashed and is deeply imbued with that critique. The Seventh Conference of the SI took place in Paris on July 9-11; it was attended by Michèle Bernstein, Guy Debord, Edith Frey, Theo Frey, Herbert Holl, Jean Garnault, Mustapha Khayati, Anton Hartstein, Ndjangani Lungela, J.V. Martin, Jan Strijbosch, Donald Nicholson-Smith, Raoul Vaneigem and René Viénet. The first point on the agenda, and the most important, was naturally the question of organization. The serious problem of the inactivity of some of the members of the SI was denounced, along with the theoretical inadequacy of other members. The SI was not an “intellectual guild”, a group of “thinkers” spinning theories alien to everyday life. Nor was it a haven for radical ideologues whose ideologies stood in stark contrast to the misery of their daily lives, or for sectarians incapable of communicating their theories to the forces that were seeking to realize them in practice. The revolutionary organization cannot reproduce within its ranks the hierarchies typical of domination. Its members must prove themselves to be consistent with the critique that they produce and this can only be achieved by practicing it. The document, “Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations”<sup>46</sup>, approved at the conclusion of the Conference, was a perfect synthesis of the discussions that had taken place there<sup>47</sup>. Jan Strijbosch and Rudi Renson were given their walking papers for being contemplatives. Anton was sent packing shortly afterwards, as much for his theoretical deficiencies as for a certain indiscretion involving the organization’s finances. Lungela left for the Congo in August. In compensation, Christopher Gray and Charles Radcliffe, the editors of

---

<sup>46</sup> Published in *Internationale Situationniste*, No. 11.

<sup>47</sup> A good analysis of the Conference may be found in Gianfranco Marelli, *L’amère victoire du situationnisme*, Editions Sulliver, Arles, 1998.

*Heatwave*, published in London, were in contact with the SI. The actual manner by which the situationist analysis was supposed to penetrate — “as their own unknown theory” — the masses while the latter are fully engaged in a frontal assault against this society, had yet to be discerned, but one fortuitous circumstance, the AFGES election, would provide a unique opportunity to try to get a glimpse of what it might be like.

Once the students and the Strasbourg situationists agreed on the advisability of producing the pamphlet, a series of meetings was scheduled to write it collectively. The very heterogeneity of the group that composed the new leadership of AFGES prevented anything of quality from being written collectively with its members in such a short time-frame. As a result, Khayati was forced to write it himself. Their understanding of the situationist theses left much to be desired, and so did the resolve on the part of some of the students to stay the course to the end. Debord contributed some ideas by mail. The pamphlet should have very long title, with an explicit reference to UNEF, and should be divided into three parts, each of which should be introduced by a quotation from Marx. It must excoriate with contempt the student as such, it must contain insults against religion, since the students are just like provincial old ladies when it comes to Christianity, and it must sustain a violent tone from beginning to end. It should not contain any comic strips, although they would be good for publicity, in the form of leaflets or a posters. The pamphlet was written and ready for the printer by the end of October.

In the meantime, on October 26, taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by the first class of the year in social psychology taught by a professor who had long been known to the situationists, certain assailants pelted their helpless victim Abraham Moles with tomatoes, and Debord ironically named the action, “Operation Robot”; “you could say that Moles has finally seen the Spirit of the Time appear in the form of a tomato”<sup>48</sup>. The plot almost didn’t come off: some of the conspirators refused to participate in the tomato barrage or to follow through with the plan to the end. Khayati had to work hard to convince the hesitant that scandals are not made half-way<sup>49</sup>. Insensible to discouragement, Debord recommended the further politicization of the atmosphere with a provocative telegram expressing UNEF’s solidarity with the Zengakuren and the Revolutionary Communist League of Japan, which would be recited over a loudspeaker at the university restaurant, Gallia, the property of AFGES. In

---

<sup>48</sup> Letter to M. Khayati, October 27, 1966.

<sup>49</sup> Pascal Dumontier, *Les Situationnistes et mai 1968. Théorie et pratique de la révolution*, éditions Gérard Lebovici, Paris, 1990. A manuscript of the book was consulted at the IISH in Amsterdam.

addition, the AFGES students' cultural center, "Le Caveau", was transformed into a rock music venue and opened up to working class youths and "*blousons noirs*"<sup>50</sup>. The first issue of the mimeographed AFGES bulletin remained firmly entrenched in the policy of provocation, featuring a communiqué from the American group, Black Mask, on the Watts riots, an article in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Hungarian revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy, a critique of the "Provo" movement in Holland, and an article praising the Zengakuren. An impressive comic strip constructed of *detournements*, the work of André Bertrand — "The Return of the Durruti Column" — was plastered all over the walls of the university. An evocative title: the Column, when it entered a town, liquidated the ruling class and proclaimed the social revolution.

On November 22, during the official inaugural celebration of the beginning of the academic year at the University, in the presence of academic authorities and other prominent figures, with the professors in their gowns and the public divided into two halves, men on one side and women on the other, while the Marseillaise was being played, a pamphlet was distributed as a supplement to issue No. 16 of 21-27 *Étudiants de France*. The pamphlet had a green cover, and bore a strange title: *De la misère en milieu étudiant considérée sous ses aspects économique, politique, psychologique, sexuel et notamment intellectuel et de quelques moyens pour y remédier* [On the Poverty of Student Life Considered in Its Economic, Political, Psychological, Sexual, and Especially Intellectual Aspects, With a Modest Proposal for Its Remedy]. Ten thousand copies of the pamphlet were printed, and the printer was paid with AFGES funds. The content, of an incomparable extremism, according to *Le Monde* (December 9, 1966), "constitutes a systematic rejection of all forms of social and political organization in the West and the East, and of all the groups that are currently trying to change them".

The next day, André Schneider, the president of the Strasbourg chapter of AFGES, flanked by Joubert and Khayati, announced a press conference to read a communiqué. Only three local reporters were showed up. The communiqué began as follows: "In view of the extremely decomposed condition of student unionism, we took over the General Federated Association of the Students of Strasbourg, although no one can say that they were deceived with regard to our intentions. We never concealed our contempt for student unionism, the caricature of a working class trade unionism that was defeated a long time ago; we took possession of the General Association to confirm its demise, rather than rebuild it from its ruins. The dissolution of the Association is one of our

---

<sup>50</sup> Christophe Bourseiller, *Vie et mort de Guy Debord*, Plon, Paris, 1999.

principal objectives.” Schneider disavowed any connection with the “beatniks” (“rather like our extreme right wing”), or with the “provos” (“too bourgeois”). The Revolutionary Communist League of Japan was more to his taste, for it is training “the kamikazes of the great moment that is to come”.

“On the Poverty of Student Life...” was extensively quoted in the media and the reaction was immediate: “The Student Association of Strasbourg Has Been Handed Over to Situationist Beatniks” (*Le Nouvel Alsacien*); “A Handful of Anarchist Dreamers Has Taken Control of UNEF” (*L’Aurore*); “after its May elections AFGES became the prisoner of a group of illuminati, with revolutionary or in any case nihilist pretensions, since they believe that the revolution is carried out by dissolving and destroying all social structures, beginning with student and working class trade unionism” (*L’Alsace*); “The ‘situationism’ International has seized power among the students at Strasbourg ... thanks to the general silence of the Strasbourg students who, in their vast majority, do not participate in the activities of the local UNEF chapter” (*Le Monde*); “the beatniks have seized power in the Strasbourg students’ association” (*Le Figaro*); finally, according to Rector Bayen, “these students, half provos, half beatniks, only represent a tiny minority of the students. They should be dealt with by psychiatrists” (*Paris-Presse*).

The new AFGES executive bureau thought that it was important to set the record straight concerning its relation to the situationists and to refute certain false allegations. In its communiqué of November 29 they stated: “None of the members of our Bureau belongs to the Situationist International, a movement which for some time has published a journal of the same name, but we declare ourselves in complete solidarity with its analyses and perspectives.” And they added: “the situationist movement can by no means be defined as ‘anarchist’, and even less as post-surrealist. The positions that it has elaborated are clearly Marxist. At the present time, it can be said that they are the only real Marxists, to the best of our knowledge.” The SI expressed its complete support for everything the executive bureau of AFGES did, in a letter sent to Schneider and Vayr-Piova, President and Vice President of AFGES, respectively.

The attacks in the press had only just begun: “The stupid end of UNEF... Order no longer reigns in Strasbourg. It doesn’t matter! The fact that so many years of progressive militancy have handed over student unionism to such riffraff says a great deal about the failure of UNEF” (*Minute*). “The revolutionary students of Strasbourg have engaged in an operation whose purpose is the systematic destruction of social structures” (*Le Figaro*); “Is Student Unionism on Vacation?” (once again, *Le Figaro*); “Let’s get one thing



straight; the situationist youths of Strasbourg are against everything [...] against the university that according to them manufactures the managerial cadres of a society without freedom; against the professors, the cadres of the factory in question" (*Le Figaro*, again). *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Monde*, the preferred newspapers of the student milieu, were somewhat more objective.

Debord and Donald Nicholson-Smith discreetly journeyed to Strasbourg in December, discussing the next moves with their comrades, getting updates, attempting to provide some practical advice, making contact with a Dutch student who had been attracted to the affair, Tony Verlaan, a future member of the American Section, etc. Throughout the month of December, there was a series of journeys back and forth between Strasbourg and Paris made by Garnault, Frey, Holl and Mustapha, and also others, such as Tony, Bertrand and Joubert. The approaching judicial offensive was nothing to fear. There still remained the real crowning moment of the scandal, slated for UNEF's upcoming national congress.

The right wing associations of the Friends of AFGES held a press conference at the School of Law and announced their intention to seek legal redress against the new executive bureau of AFGES and at the same time to form a kind of parallel administration supported by the students. Business interests that depended on the union were at stake. On December 7, these associations, along with the association of former members of AFGES, the Vice-Mayor and a handful of prominent local figures, filed a complaint with the Supreme Court of Strasbourg. On December 13, the chief magistrate, judge Llabador, issued an injunction to place AFGES under the proxy supervision of a judicial administrator, shut down its offices and other facilities and prohibit the convening of the general assembly scheduled for December 16. His justification for these measures merits repeating: "One need only read what the accused have written for it to be obvious that these five students, scarcely more than adolescents, lacking any experience of real life, their minds confused by ill-digested philosophical, social, political and economic theories and bored by the drab monotony of their everyday life, have the pathetic arrogance to make sweeping denunciations of their fellow students, their professors, God, religion, the clergy, and the governments and political and social systems of the entire world. Rejecting all morality and legal restraint, these cynics do not shrink from advocating theft, the destruction of scholarship, the abolition of work, total subversion and a permanent worldwide proletarian revolution with 'unrestrained pleasure' as its only goal"<sup>51</sup>. The executive bureau filed an appeal against the injunction and also decided to convene the general assembly scheduled for the 16<sup>th</sup>. Four hundred people attended the general assembly. They voted to defy the judge's

---

<sup>51</sup> Olivier Todd, "Strasbourg en situation...", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, December 21, 1966.

order and condemned the machinations of the Friends of AFGES. Significantly, no vote was taken on the question of the dissolution of AFGES, which was the original reason for holding the assembly, and further debate on the issue was postponed until the upcoming UNEF congress, where a more far-reaching motion to dissolve UNEF itself would be proposed.

At the end of December the second issue of *Nouvelles*, the bulletin of AFGES, was distributed, featuring a report by the executive bureau entitled, "Balance Sheet and Prospects". The bureau circulated a manifesto signed by Jean and Theo, from the SI, and by Schneider and Vayr-Piova, on behalf of the bureau, which bore the title, "And It's Only Just Begun" ["Et ça ne fait que commencer"]. It began with the quotation from judge Llabador reproduced above and then continued as follows: "A specter haunts the world: the specter of revolution. All the powers of the old world have joined forces in a Holy Alliance to destroy it: the Judiciary and the Press, the self-proclaimed communists leashed to the priests, the senator and his 'students'. This alliance needs the scandal of our presence. And every new stage of repression is forced to confirm our analysis in every detail. The public reactions that have greeted our declared project of sabotaging this miserable union have unmasked complicities that are shocking to those who do not know how to read them. Afraid of losing their ritual and imaginary opposition, the powers that be have come to the rescue of the last of the Mohicans of UNEF. [...] Now that the judiciary and the moribund UNEF have awakened to refurbish their tarnished reputations, AFGES is already dead. Our job is done here; we will arise again somewhere else, on other terrains. You have not heard the last from the Situationist International, and you will continue to hear about it until the advent of the international power of the Workers Councils." And while the affair was still front page news, the Christmas holidays put the movement on hold. The pamphlet was distributed as widely as possible and the first edition was soon out of print.

When the schools reopened in January, the first session of the annual general assembly of the National Students Union of France (UNEF) convened in Paris, attended by a delegation from Strasbourg. On January 11, Vayr-Piova, in his capacity as President of the Administrative Council of the MNEF, the National Mutual Fund of the Students of France, which was the funding source for the operations of the university psychological clinics, the BAPU [Bureau d'aide psychologique universitaire], read a "Notice" decreeing the closing of the BAPU at Strasbourg: "considering that the BAPUs are the manifestation in the student milieu of repressive psychiatry's parapolice control, whose obvious function is to maintain . . . the passivity of all exploited sectors... The BAPU tend to adapt the student to certain unacceptable existing conditions, which generate problems for which society itself is responsible. We demand above all a radical

transformation of this society”, and he also called for the closure of all BAPU facilities and for all their funds to be used instead for paying for a new edition of the pamphlet, *On the Poverty of Student Life*... And if this was not clear enough for the stunned audience, René Viénet, who had been appointed to serve on the Strasbourg delegation, then slowly and deliberately read the text of the pamphlet aloud to the assembled delegates. The bureaucrats of the student associations, especially the Stalinists, began to shout and scream at the top of their lungs. But this insult was only followed by another.

At the beginning of the UNEF general assembly session on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the Strasbourg delegation demanded an immediate vote on the motion to dissolve UNEF in its entirety, “considering that the UNEF declared itself a union uniting the vanguard of youth (Charter of Grenoble, 1946) at a time when labor unionism had long since been defeated and turned into a tool for the self-regulation of modern capitalism, working to integrate the working class into the commodity system; ... considering that the vanguardist pretension of the UNEF is constantly belied by its subreformist slogans and practice; ... considering that student unionism is a pure and simple farce and that it is urgent to put an end to it.” The motion concluded with an appeal “to all revolutionary students of the world ... to join all the exploited people of their countries in undertaking a relentless struggle against all aspects of the old world, with the aim of contributing toward the international power of workers councils”. The motion was rejected, of course, but it did win the support of the delegation from Nantes and of the students in convalescent homes. The scandal had spread from the local to the national arena, but then an incident occurred that put an end to the situationist intervention.

A circular of the SI summarized the proceedings of a meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> at which it was established that Khayati was the target of slanderous accusations leveled at him by Theo Frey, Garnault and Holl, “for tactical reasons and to camouflage their own maneuvers”, which resulted in the expulsion of Khayati’s accusers from the SI. On January 16, those same individuals, along with Edith Frey, who was not present at the meeting, submitted their resignations, offering “*post festum*” justifications for their actions, the main ones being the inability of the SI to overcome its status as “a group of theoreticians” and to transform itself into a serious revolutionary organization, the mediator between theory and practice; the SI’s refusal to dissolve and discuss the next step towards a “higher form of organization”; and the existence of an “occult hierarchy” that necessarily led to a “sub-bolshevik” practice<sup>52</sup>. The group of students associated with the

---

<sup>52</sup> “La Vérité est révolutionnaire” [The Truth Is Revolutionary], in *Pour une critique d l'avanguardisme. L'unique et sa propriété*, May 1967, Haguenuau.

former executive bureau of AFGES expressed their support for the excluded or resigned members: Christine Ballivet, Nasri, Christian Millot, René Geiler, Robert Fischer, Bruno Vayr-Piova, and Schneider himself, who switched sides a few days earlier, alleging that he had been deceived. In a communiqué issued at almost the same time, “You Are Laughing at Us, But Not for Long”, they accused the SI of displaying an unjustifiable contempt towards their theoretical capacities, insofar as they were oriented towards action, as a result of “the SI’s own defects”. Taking the side of the SI in Paris were Joubert, Bertrand and Tony. Long-repressed resentments, grudges and enmities suddenly rose to the surface, unleashing a spate of low blows and turgid analyses that could hardly be understood by outsiders. In a devastating declaration, “Warning! Three Provocateurs” [“Attention! Trois provocateurs”], the SI accused the Alsatian group of having formed “a secret fraction” to “to reinforce democracy and the equal participation of all in the situationist project”, or, should this prove to be impossible, to dissolve the SI. “They were sure that all the situationists are equal, but they found themselves less equal than the others.” Feeling offended at “finding themselves beneath the level of real participation in the SI”, they proposed “to valorize the abstract experience of total, immediate participation”, at the cost of disseminating despicable falsehoods. The exclusion took on a disagreeable, violent tone, with personal attacks and insults: “for the first time ever, a group was identified as a nest of traitors, and given a name that was intended to serve as a synonym for infamy”<sup>53</sup>, Vaneigem would observe much later, although at the time he, too, supported the official version of “a secret fraction [that] was able to form among us” but “was rapidly exposed”<sup>54</sup>. The SI’s opponents responded in kind, using the same kind of language and hurling identical accusations<sup>55</sup>. The existence of a directive situationist nucleus in Paris, and of a subordinate nucleus in Strasbourg that executed the commands issued from Paris, had awakened suspicions in the SI’s new members, which, despite the proclaimed internal democracy, were not brought to light at the time. Furthermore, these suspicions spread to the former executive bureau of AFGES and their friends, and were only exacerbated by Khayati’s cold and distant approach towards them. The students felt uncomfortable with the leading role that their own theoretical shortcomings had granted to the “Paris” SI and felt that they were not being treated with the consideration they deserved as the people who were actually implementing the SI’s tactics. The local *situs* contemplated the scene with their hands tied. On the

---

<sup>53</sup> *Rien n’est fini, tout commence.*

<sup>54</sup> “Avoir pour but la vérité pratique”, *Internationale Situationniste*, No. 11.

<sup>55</sup> Mario Perniola, *I situazioneisti*, Alberto Castelvocchi editore, Roma, 1998. The Spanish edition of this work is unreadable.

one hand, there was the lack of autonomy of the group led by Garnault and the Freys; on the other hand, there was Debord's mistrust of Holl and his scorn for "irresponsible people" who "progressed so laboriously during this small scandal, and *en bloc*, though they were completely opposed to each other"<sup>56</sup>. Faced with such irreconcilable contradictions, Debord, who was not at all prone to yielding to sentimentalism towards just anyone and who was even less accustomed to trusting those whom he considered to be irresponsible, decided to make a clean break, dispensing with the recently acquired sympathizers and publicly chastising the dissenters. He conferred upon them the humiliating sobriquet of "Garnaultins". This truly Bolshevik procedure was indicative of a scorched earth tactic. The sympathizers who had demonstrated enough merit to be admitted into the SI (Joubert, Bertrand, Schneider) must depart from Strasbourg and leave their impoverishment behind them. But they never did. As for the excluded members, or those who were considered to be excluded, their continued presence in a quiet little provincial city within the well-trodden confines of the university did not favor their plans for advancing to a new stage of being "more extremist than the SI", an effect aggravated by their sparse endowments with respect to agitation, but which nonetheless drove them to engage in a kind of naive activism — unsuccessfully repeating their old electoral tactics — which was further distorted by an increasingly more abstract mode of thought, which explains why their little excursion on the wild side did not last very long.

The "Garnaultin" affair caused the SI to turn inward, requiring a greater degree of internal control, a demand for more coherence in participating in its activities and for more stringent requirements for relations with other autonomous groups; these initiatives were ineffective and failed to resolve the contradictions generated within the SI by the emergence of multiple opportunities for revolutionary intervention that were not always successfully addressed, and which were often left unexploited. After the dissolution of the International, Debord's animosity towards his former comrades revealed a will to belittle them, and to erase their presence from his memory. Mustapha Khayati's protest against the publication of the pamphlet, "On the Poverty of Student Life...", by Champ Libre in late 1976 provided Debord with an occasion to give free rein to his hostility towards Khayati, and towards Vaneigem, as well, when he even went so far as to cast doubts on Khayati's authorship of the pamphlet in a text entitled, "Fuck!", derisively signed, "Some Proletarians". Debord's self-aggrandizement and thinly-veiled defeatist attitude rose to the surface in the film, *In Girum Imus Nocte et*

---

<sup>56</sup> Letter to André Bertrand and Daniel Joubert, January 22, 1967, in the Daniel Guérin archives of the Library of the University of Nanterre. Vaneigem added the detail that Theo Frey was a teetotaler, which might appear trivial at first sight, but which was of some importance in a group of drinkers.

*Consumimur Igni*, produced in 1978. The ebb of the workers movement, with the concomitant disappearance of any prospect for the universal power of the Workers Councils, contributed to this development. Gianfranco Sanguinetti, the last of Debord's comrades to feel the sting of his calumny, expressed the opinion, thirty-three years later, that this personality change in Debord that entailed the annihilation of the reality of the other persons who were involved in the situationist adventure, "naturally affected those who had made the greatest contributions to the subversion of which the SI was the standard-bearer. He wanted to stand alone. It would be no exaggeration to say that from that moment on, he engaged in systematic efforts to minimize the role played by all the other members of the group"<sup>57</sup>. Vaneigem jokingly suggested that the key to this enigma might be found in Orson Welles' film, *Mr. Arkadin*. The plot of that film, so admired by Debord, tells the story of a business magnate who hires a small-time smuggler to uncover the facts concerning his past, which he claims he cannot remember. This improvised private investigator accepts the job, but as he discovers material witnesses to the past of his client, an unknown party kills them, one after another.

Now that the generalized disaster that has followed in the wake of the complete globalization of the economy demands a culture of catastrophe that is equal to the circumstances, the invisible hand of spectacular domination whose purpose is to liquidate the subversive legacy of the situationists is embodied in a whole constellation of prostitute historians, careerist biographers, mercenary academics, cultural cheerleaders and Debordologists of every stripe, all prepared to raise a monument to the glory of the artist in order to all the more effectively distort and erase the example of the revolutionary. In a way, Debord sought out his own self-destruction. The recuperative labors of the pack, involving essentially the sophisticated distortion of the past, are currently being prosecuted in conjunction with vast efforts of institutionalization and commercialization, but we can at least be sure of the fact that they will only convince those who are easily convinced, that is, fools, and those who were already convinced, that is, knaves.

Miguel Amorós, February 10, 2018.

Source: [LibCom.org](http://libcom.org)

---

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Sanguinetti to M. Khayati, December 10, 2012, available on the website of Jules Bonnot de la Bande, <http://julesbonnotdelabande.blogspot.com/>.

## ZAD's Victory

On January 17, 2018, the French Prime Minister announced the cancellation of the gigantic construction project to build a useless airport on land in the municipality of Notre Dame des Landes. The joy and happiness unleashed among the resisters of ZAD [Zone to Defend], farmers, occupiers, neighbors, friends and sympathizers, reached its clamorous peak at the festival of February 10, the date marking the expiration of the Declaration of Public Utility for the stillborn Nantes airport. It was a moment to celebrate an indisputable victory and to enjoy something that does not happen very often. Of course, everyone knows that the struggle is not over, for the State will not allow its plans to be stymied that easily and will attempt to reconquer the lost ground sometime in the future, and will threaten legal action, plan evacuations, and initiate divisive maneuvers and measures to normalize the situation. Nonetheless, the 1,650 hectares of "*bocage*", a kind of rural landscape of hedgerows and sunken lanes characteristic of the Atlantic seaboard, will be preserved, and with them, the commons, the new ways of life and social relations alien to the logic of the commodity that have been established among its inhabitants. The ZADist defenders have resolved to build barricades every time that the powers that be try to recover the territory, and to build a more free future around an Alternative Agricultural Zone.

The airport project is as old as the protest that has always accompanied it, but the protest took a qualitative leap forward by abandoning legalistic procedures and engaging in creative occupation instead. In the summer of 2009, the name, ZAD — Zone to Defend — was popularized, and since then the repression directed against the occupiers and the local inhabitants was enforced in earnest, until its culmination on October 16, 2012 with "Operation Caesar", a deployment of police forces that failed miserably and only served to increase the local people's solidarity with the resistance. Against all odds, the inhabitants of the area have been able to reconcile their interests, overcome their disagreements and present a united front against all the anti-ZAD initiatives of the multinational corporation, VINCI, its local cheerleaders, judges and authorities. A community of struggle was consolidated, supported by numerous committees all over France. In one way or another, over the years, solidarity proved decisive at crucial moments, mobilizing huge demonstrations, and it is

this persistence that forced the State to yield. ZAD was victorious. The largest and longest-lasting occupation in Europe succeeded.

The struggle against the project has now reached a new stage: what is needed now is to preserve and extend the legacy of the struggle, develop alternative infrastructures, and engage in self-management of a liberated territory. The main thing is: to maintain and to reinforce the institutions of self-government, to avoid institutional traps and to resist the pressures of the market economy. In short, to forge links, to establish moral bonds of commitment, cooperation and mutual aid: what the sociologists call the social fabric. The struggle has ceased to be a principally defensive one, and has now become a constructive action based on non-developmental relations. Much has been accomplished (support networks, workshops, collective gardens, kitchens, radio, seed banks...), but there is still much to do.



It is also necessary to prevent ZAD from degenerating into a marginal gesture, or from succumbing to its internal contradictions. A “customary assembly” was created in December of 2017 to mediate internal conflicts that



arose as a result of divergent practices. The same assembly drafted a list of delegates to represent the different components of the resistance in order to meet with the emissaries of the State. These delegates cannot make decisions, but are limited to expressing the mandates of the assembly (a document that consists of six points). The assembly makes the decisions. It demanded, for example, amnesty for those who were threatened by expropriation or expulsion for defending the *bocage*, the unhindered right of the occupiers to remain to participate in the struggle, and a moratorium on the purchase and sale of land for at least three years, in order to prevent privatization that would militate against the collective experience. All to bring about a future without an airport based on the mutual respect of coexistence amidst a diversity of opinions.

The ZADists do not devote much energy to negotiations; they know that they are swimming against the current and that the most they can hope for is to keep the enemy at bay, and gain time to posit new, more firmly-rooted forms of coexistence on the terrain. They are aware of the fact that the mobilizations have not ended, and that there are still problems that divide the occupiers, such as, for example, the question of the creation of a legal entity to represent the movement; and finally, they know that the movement's internal equilibrium is fragile and the enemy's resolve is strong. Without mentioning any other incidents, yesterday the gendarmes evicted the occupiers of the Lejuc forest, who were trying to stop a project to bury nuclear wastes in Bure (Meuse). No one can ignore the fact, however, that the movement has proven that it can stand up to adverse conditions; that it can concentrate sufficient forces to resist and turn the tide of events; and finally, that fighting is not a waste of time, and that, sometimes, you can even win.

Viva ZAD!

For a free and self-managed society!

Miguel Amorós, February 23, 2018

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“La victoria de la ZAD”**

## When the Barbarians Invade the Periphery

### *The Commercialization and Destruction of the Catalanian Pyrenees*

In a globalized world, and therefore in an urbanized society, where a good part of the population has enough buying power, its own private automobile and sufficient “free” time, businesses serving the needs of recreation and escape are becoming the fastest-growing economic sector. Leisure occupies an increasingly more important place in the alienated life of the people of the major urban concentrations [*conurbaciones*]. In the periphery, with the collapse of industrial production due to declining competitiveness and a lack of technological innovation, the economy took refuge in other activities that involve less “value added”, such as, for example, logistics, construction and, above all else, mass tourism. This was what happened in the Spanish state, and, as a corollary, in Catalonia as well. With the onset of the crisis of 2008-2014, at least in the Catalanian region, industrial tourism became the main driver of the economy, which inevitably entailed a considerable environmental impact and a profound alteration of the territory on a qualitatively greater scale than all previous changes taken together, leaving an unprecedented ecological footprint. Tourism “is a source of wealth” and “a driver of growth”, according one of the Generalitat’s technocrats, but it is also an industry that gives rise to immediate disruptions; it is a factor of disequilibrium and trivialization of the first magnitude, as well as a source of low-wage jobs and a powerful factor for the promotion of industrial food. Foreign investment, the construction of new urban concentrations, with their infrastructure and buildings, the super-exploitation of the cultural, historical and natural patrimony, the waste of energy, the pollution and the accumulation of waste on a vast scale, etc., are the heralds of a new territorial reality. These signs of barbarism reveal the true meaning of what government leaders, technical specialists and expert advisors call “injecting value” into the territory, “optimizing” its resources, “making it profitable”, and, to top it all off, “offering incentives for the development of entrepreneurial skills” and “cultivating leadership”. This lexicon, borrowed from the marketing industry, clearly indicates that what they have in mind is the conversion of the territory into a commodity. As a result, the local patrimony, customs, history and the natural landscape itself

constitute a new type of capital. When the valorization process, which is also a process of regulation, is fully deployed, all other kinds of activity that do not fit into the territorial side of the economic “supply” formulas, that is, activities that do not give rise to monetary profit, such as, for example, traditional agriculture and livestock-raising, disinterested cooperation, barter, hospitality, or free recreational activities, are living on borrowed time. We will pay for everything, for gathering mushrooms, for camping, for sitting quietly and meditating by a waterfall; the enormous demand for recreation will soon render payment compulsory for every activity in the territory. The total conversion of the territory into a diligently managed business, or to express this same idea in technical jargon, its transformation into a “brand”, leaves its inhabitants outside the decision making process, expropriated, since the only needs that matter are those demanded by the accumulation of capital and the dynamics of power, not those of the residents of the territory. Life in the mountain counties will then be totally redefined by the political, administrative and financial hierarchies that will control, at each and every step, the use of the territory, a use that will be determined by a continuous series of development plans, each worse than the previous one.

This trend has a long history. What we are witnessing today is nothing but the integration of a regional market into a global market. The process of the commercialization of the Pyrenees Mountains began during the 1960s with the construction of the first ski resorts (the first one was built at Baqueira-Beret), but it did not really take off until the 1980s with the generalization of the ownership of second homes, and exploded a decade later with the avalanche of skiers, the growing popularity of adventure sports, and the now-common practice of spending one’s vacations and weekends in the country. The first phase did not have much of an impact, since not everyone owned a car back then and the cars that were owned by ordinary people weren’t very reliable for long trips, and television, which had by that time made its appearance in proletarian homes, kept people glued to their couches. The second phase was worse, since the generalization of private automobile ownership multiplied the mobility of the city-dwellers. Leisure was “democratized”. The third phase, corresponding with the creation of the Pyrenees “brand”, required State intervention to build highways and other basic infrastructure. The Barcelona-Manresa highway was finished in 1994 and the Manresa-Berga highway was completed in 1999, opening the floodgates like never before to the urban hordes. The ongoing decline of livestock-raising and agriculture, the final crisis of the textile industry, and the closure of the mines opened the door wide to the intensive exploitation of snow, rivers, meadows, forests, mountain peaks,

houses in the country and backwoods trails. The fourth phase, that of the internationalization of the brand, began in 2004 with the creation of the Euroregion known as Pyrenees-Mediterranean, accompanied by a multinational program of violent and extremely disruptive development of the territory, based on an increase in the number of recreational facilities, the systematic expansion of transportation networks and a deliberate project of social disintegration. Thanks to the interested contribution of foreign capital, the mountainous territory will be completely “redesigned” to accommodate the arrival of a wave of tourists from other countries. Tickets for air travel, an excursion to the casino, and a day at the beach will be included in the price of the package deal. The goal can be none other than the complete transformation of the Pyrenees counties into a vast theme park, an alpine Disneyland.

First, the industrialization of the Catalanian economy, followed by tertiarization, created a monster, the Barcelona metropolitan area, which constituted an urban system in conjunction with other, lesser metropolitan areas connected by roads, highways and beltways. And this monster harbored a large middle class whose desires to consume territory had to be taken into account. Life in the metropolis had become so impoverished, and so claustrophobic, that a widespread longing to disconnect from it for even a short time, to escape to nature just as the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats did in the past, was irrepressible. For this class, and for the proletariat that imitated it as much as it could, leisure was not relaxation and inactivity, but a reason to set oneself in motion and to do whatever was fashionable. Thus, the neurosis caused by the deterioration of urban life lies at the origin of the commercialization of leisure, which turned it into just another kind of work. “Free” time, thanks to the stress and emptiness of private life in the urban areas, became the raw material for an industry that would inflict a demographic upheaval on the Pyrenees counties, disarticulate the territory, orient the life of the people towards consumerism, pander to the vulgar tastes of the visitors and ruin the beauty of the landscape. The mountain sunburn would become a mark of distinction among the people of Barcelona and other metropolitan areas, a trophy, the trademark of the Pyrenees brand. It was among those who thus sought refuge from the metropolis that the capitalist regime found its most fervently loyal social base, ready to vote as directed for any pro-tourism candidate; and all the candidates were pro-tourism. In the meantime, the major beneficiaries of the invasion of motorized weekend warriors fleeing boredom and ennui were gloating over their success at FITUR [International Tourism Trade Fair] and over the recognition of the Pyrenees zone as a first class tourist destination by the European Union. The Pyrenees were submerged in the European market and Barcelona shared with other major metropolitan areas on

the other side of the border the role of colonizer. It was the latest form assumed by the idea of progress: the noxious and malignant rule over nature and society by science, technology, the economy and the State.

Tourism isn't cheap; it must be connected with the transmitting centers. It therefore requires huge expenditures on highways, petrol stations, access roads, power lines, pipelines, garbage dumps, tunnels, bridges, etc. Thousands of vehicles traverse the zone each day causing traffic jams during the weekends and holidays, so that there is an urgent need for new traffic lanes, bypasses, interchanges and various other improvements. Considerable expenditures on the provision of accessory services, supplies and non-residential structures are also urgently needed, such as, for example, parking lots, chairlifts, water supplies for the snow-making machines, horse stables, garages and storage facilities for mountain bikes, all terrain vehicles, 4x4s, canoes, kayaks, whitewater rafts, motorbikes, hang-gliders, and installations for ski lifts, etc. All mountain sports, from heli-biking to whitewater rafting, and from trekking to snowboarding, are just so many manifestations of the primordial capitalist mentality: the taste for competition, for overcoming obstacles, for demonstrating endurance, for the cult of hard work, for risk-taking, for exhibitionism... The spirit of capitalism is reborn with the sportsman and even more so among the spectators.

Real estate deals are conducted with fewer hindrances in the counties of the interior than in the coastal regions and the metropolitan areas, since profit is the only factor that counts and the economic profits from tourism, compared with any of the activities that it is replacing, are vastly greater. Hotels, campgrounds, houses in the country, advertising for vacation getaways, discotheques, fast food restaurants, shopping centers and huge numbers of automobiles, reproduce the conditions of the urban habitat and impose the values of a life that is the prisoner of consumption. Real estate prices and rents skyrocket, the native folklore is degraded into a spectacle, local festivals take on a superficial and corny atmosphere; the past is turned into a museum exhibit and moral bonds between people are replaced by other, commercial, bonds. The tourist has no interest in knowing the places that he tramples, and much less their inhabitants, which is why he will conform to the stereotype of his kind. He is not too demanding when it comes to authenticity: a few elements of local color and a few local specialties are enough for him. The guardian angel of kitsch accompanies him and protects him from an excess of originality: vulgarity and bad taste are in the driver's seat. We could say that the metropolis provides a new material and spiritual form to the territory; it standardizes it, weakens it and corrupts it without the territory being able to defend itself, for a

lack of forces and means. Tourism leaves the local capacity for social interaction in a much more fragile state than ever before. It means the end of the community spirit and the helping hand, and of the very idea of the “people”. When the car became a kind of prosthesis for the inhabitant of the big city, the territory was completely subjugated by the city and ended up reflecting it in all of its aspects. The territory is now a peri-urban space, a satellite of the Barcelona metropolitan area and its vicinity. The parasitic life now plays a decisive role in the territory and as a result new entrepreneurial and neo-rural classes are emerging within it, connected directly or indirectly with the one-way development now underway. To change things in the countryside, things will have to change in the city. To restore the old ways of life without shifting the burden of economic costs for such a change onto the periphery, it will be necessary to dismantle the center. No liberation of any kind will be possible unless we put an end to capitalism, but we cannot put an end to capitalism if we leave all its structures intact.

As the labyrinthine destructive forces of tourism gain more and more ground, diversify and become more mobile, and wild spaces are subjected to mass consumption and depersonalization, the landscape is eroded and nature retreats, the flora soon disappear and the fauna withdraw and migrate wherever they can. The contradictions of developmentalism are manifested in the form of out-of-control urbanization, environmental crisis, resource depletion and social malaise. Although the awareness of the eminently destructive nature of economic growth has yet to assume the form of open opposition, with the exception of minorities engaged in indefatigable battles in defense of the territory, the anxieties of those who are economically dependent on tourism concerning losses occasioned by the over-saturation of their districts by the tourism industry, have awakened a certain kind of sensibility in favor of conservation and environmental protection. The magical expression, “sustainable tourism”, issues from the mouths of the representatives of the so-called “stakeholders” [“actores sociales”]: employers associations, environmentalist groups, trade unions and political parties. While the market model is unquestioned, the proposal is made for “alternative local development”. The promoters of this kind of development want to associate consumption, devastation and growth with good times, economic recovery and equity, on the basis of “instruments for intervening in and transforming the economy”, that is, with laws, ordinances, taxes and fees, contracts and programs promoted or supported by the stakeholders. They do not want to de-commercialize the territory, but to implement a somewhat less aggressive form of exploitation, by resorting to the supplementary use of a marginal economic network that is supposed to palliate the effects of and serve as a counterweight to

the endless pillage implied by totally unregulated development. Nothing is challenged; certainly not the capitalist system. They call for a sustainable use of the land without even considering de-urbanizing it; they talk about the right to choose and cultivate one's own food without proposing measures against agribusiness and the food processing industry; they demand rational legislation without also demanding the repeal of existing laws that are so permissive with regard to dubious practices; they extol certain traditional customs without questioning the legitimacy of existing commercial law; in short, they want a less conventional, more ecological tourism, disregarding the fact that ecology and tourism are mutually exclusive. In any case, this soft and fluffy tourism will never affect more than a minuscule part of the existing market demand; it will never approach the popularity of mass tourism. The new middle classes of the counties of the Pyrenees are anxiously watching their territory being destroyed, since their interests will be harmed over the long run by this trend, but they do not want to confront those who are responsible. They are romantics and materialists at the same time, bourgeois and popular. They are sitting on the fence. They want development and progress without the consequences these things necessarily entail. They want harmonious relations with the environment without removing it from the reach of the market economy or the control of the State: they want rain (or, more precisely, snow) *and* good times.

Neither the regeneration of the territory, nor the restoration of its authentic inhabitants, can be achieved with half-way measures, nor can they be legitimately brought about by government administrators, politicians or the economy itself. Co-management between government authorities, trade unions, associations of young people, and employers, is only a mechanism to harmonize the most catastrophic sort of development with the interests of the half-domesticated population, for the purpose of rendering conflicts unnecessary. The typical clichés of “sustainability”, “responsibility”, “participation”, “transverse democracy”, “quality”, “local”, etc., make this perfectly clear. Territorial democracy is something completely different and instead involves the capacity of neighborhoods or districts for autonomous self-organization and living in common without either leaders or commercial mediations. To revitalize the territory we have to de-parasitize it, which means that we have to remove it from the economy through a plan for decentralization, de-industrialization and de-urbanization that will involve, on the one hand, a confrontation with the ruling classes and their political servants, and on the other hand, extensive ruralization. The ruralists must stand on a solid commitment, for they need clear goals and strategies for achieving those goals. Occupations and mobilizations for the defense of the territory must allow for a

correlation of forces favorable for the autonomy of the rural population, precisely in order to encourage a new and different kind of exodus from the conurbations, so that not only will people be available to repopulate places that have been or are currently being abandoned, but the conditions will be created in which a network of farmers and livestock raisers can be articulated that will be able to resist laws, regulations and administrative controls. Despite the fact that more than five hundred Catalan municipalities are in danger of extinction due to their locations outside the circuits of the tourism industry, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to engage in free resettlement of the affected towns and villages and to pursue independent agriculture. The State gets involved when private initiative has not already done the job: it forbids settlement, registers all the livestock, counts the trees and measures the acreage of the cropland, monitors the seeds, in short, it establishes the conditions for all authorized activity. It mandates the labeling of products, its files contain photographs of the land and buildings, it prohibits direct sale of products by farmers to consumers, establishes quotas and fixes prices, levies specific fees and collects taxes. Few are those who openly defy these laws and regulations, and their voices are not heard from so far away. Others prefer to be “pragmatic” and fall into line. Even so, the struggle continues. The defense of the territory has two sides, one destructive, and the other oriented towards reconstruction. It is a two-pronged struggle to liberate the territory from financial and administrative straightjackets, and to promote a free, deeply-rooted way of life in the country, in equilibrium with the environment and alien to the law. It is a constant battle to stop the big useless projects of the developers and government bodies, and to block the passage of the frenzied urban hordes; and it is at the same time a battle to create forms of self-government and collective labor, to restore open councils, neighborhood committees and the commons. It is therefore also a struggle to rediscover the city, to give it human dimensions, to manage its affairs from the agora. A free territory cannot exist if it surrounds an enslaved city, nor can an emancipated city exist within a servile territory.

Miguel Amorós

Notes for a presentation at the Berga *casal d'avis* [social center] scheduled for February 24, 2018, in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the founding of the group Piolet Negre (a hiking club Berga, in northern Catalonia.).

Source: [LibCom.org](http://LibCom.org)

Original text:

**“Cuando los bárbaros invadieron la periferia**  
*Mercantilización y destrucción del Pirineo catalán”*



# Taking Stock

## *Reflections on the Uncertain Likelihood of a European Revolution*

“With respect to the past, the most important thing is to be aware of the specificity of our time, taking care, as much as possible, not to project our current way of looking at things onto a past that only would only serve us as a justification.”

—Jacques Ellul, *Autopsy of a Revolution*.

The enormous contradictions accumulated by the capitalist system over the last fifty years have not awakened a will to live in another way in broad sectors of the population that would impel radical transformations in mass society. To the contrary, apathy and fear have predominated, giving rise to passive and resigned support for the status quo, which is viewed as the lesser evil. It would seem that the greatest achievement of global capitalism has been the complete integration of the masses in an artificial and alien world, and that the will to abolish it has yielded to fear of being excluded from it. We are therefore presented with the curious paradox that favorable objective conditions for revolution have produced subjective conditions characterized by the submission of the majority, the disappearance of revolutionary consciousness, and, as a corollary, the absence of a social force with the potential to even attempt to engage in a revolutionary process.

The logic of the commodity and of unbridled economic development has so profoundly penetrated society that it has successfully prevented the appearance of any collective revolutionary subject in Europe, or has at least impeded its development. This phenomenon has a dual aspect: on the one hand, the decline of thought; and on the other hand, the hypostasis of action, which is demoted to an ideological pretext for compliance with the standards established by the spectacle of everyday life. So this society's leaders get what they want: nothing is more convenient for them than a model of thought that requires no effort (weak thought) and an activism that swims with the current. For there is nothing easier than to follow the trends of fashion in circumstances in which it is the ruling elite that in the final analysis is giving the orders; and nothing is more difficult than to think and to act freely in a space without real freedom. For a

system that considers itself unquestionable, the social question only exists in literature and any real opposition is inconceivable.

In a situation like the current one, where patriotic mystifications and political clichés are ubiquitous, alongside commercial propaganda, in an everyday world where a stifling conformism frustrates and expels any subversive desire, thinking constitutes the most radical and most daring act, and also the one that arouses the most suspicion and hostility. To construct a critical apparatus that can veraciously explain our epoch is our principal task. The first issue to address is the fact of the disintegration of the working class at a time when wage labor has been generalized, and therefore, the loss of a socialist revolutionary horizon and its replacement by an attachment to the consumption of commodity abundance. For the majority of the workers have preferred the comforts of a life determined by the imperatives of the economy to the ardors of a battle against all forms of oppression and injustice.

The working class is no longer in itself and for itself the negation of the bourgeois order. In our postmodern world, it does not occupy a special position that would lead it to question capitalism regardless of what it might think or want, a position that would transform it into the gravedigger of capitalism. In the phase of globalization, the status of wage labor does not imprint it with a class character, nor does it confer a sense of belonging to a class. Thus, the working class condition has ceased to be the bearer of universal values. It does not imply any historical function, nor does it indicate any redemptive mission. Nor are there any social struggles currently underway that would reveal the ineluctable advance of the proletariat towards the emancipation of humanity. Rather the contrary: extremely prosaic aspirations, and the total absence of any will to change the world. The working class as Marxism conceives it is a historical product whose time has passed. Its most recent European manifestations took place during the 1970s. The proletariat is indeed a social reality, just like the alienation of which it was once conscious, but today, with a capitalism that is very different from the capitalism of the beginnings of the industrial revolution, and a State that is vastly over-developed, this type of class no longer exists.

At first, the mechanization of the productive processes played an important role in this trend. It not only transformed the workers into appendages of machines, but eventually even replaced them with machines. Having been relegated to the margins of production, the proletariat lost the power to paralyze it and use it for its own benefit: the power of sabotage and self-management. Work was turned into a means of survival otherwise devoid of content, and the relative material

prosperity and the escalating proliferation of mass entertainment diverted attention towards the world of consumption. Big retail chain stores, radio programs and the cinema provided alienated existence with the meaning that had been evacuated from the workplace. Television, the Internet and smartphones did the rest. Commodity fetishism, the leisure industry and, finally, social networking websites colonized everyday life, separating the public sphere from the private sphere and submerging both in an unreal world, nullifying even the slightest chance that any class consciousness might develop. Things, and even more, their images, have acquired more and more of a life of their own, taking the place of people. The subject of the revolution was transformed into an object of consumption and of the spectacle. The workers, estranged from the products and consequences of their labor, that is, alienated, now behave as spectators of a virtual reality rather than as agents of historical change. Alienation, far from awakening consciousness, has for the most part produced disenchantment and complacency, narcissism and psychopathology.

Capitalism is a social system that imposes its rule by way of technology, the spectacle, fictitious communication and the forces of order of a hypertrophied State. Instrumental and bureaucratic rationality, by mediating every domain of existence, subjects life to the interests of domination. It not only manipulates, but directly manufactures, thoughts and desires. The desire for authority is a good example. The attraction of the electoral game is another. Generally speaking, the state machinery and the technological means at its disposal are not adapted to individuals; it is individuals who adapt and submit to them. This is what is called going along with progress. Capitalism cannot survive without a continuous and constant adaptation to a changing, increasingly more invasive market, or without that market's complement, the total separation of individuals from each other that has been made possible by technology, that is, without the technologically assisted, prolonged self-destruction of individuality. With such fragments of egocentric personality, no community is possible.

The mechanization of the productive process, together with the bureaucratization that demands the appalling growth of the State, of the means of communication and of industrial and financial management, have led to the unprecedented expansion of a non-proletarian sector of salaried workers composed of white collar employees, civil servants, executives, technicians and professionals; this sector has been instilled with a certain dynamism by the most recent crises. In the 1960s, certain sociologists called this sector the "new intermediate salaried stratum", "the new middle class", or even the "new working class", attributing it with historical tasks that formerly corresponded to the proletariat. However, this sector has never manifested even the least

revolutionary inclination, nor has it questioned any aspect at all of industrial society or the State. No one bites the hand that feeds him. Neither due to their objective condition, nor by virtue of their mentality, their expectations, or the place they occupy in the system, are these new salaried middle classes destined to be the agents of any kind of radical change, much less a revolution, which does not however mean that they will remain quiescent when faced with a crisis that affects them, as was the case with the various financial crashes that took place since 2008 and the subsequent austerity policies. The mobilization of these classes, and especially of their most threatened younger elements, has not had a significant impact on the economy, but it has led to significant changes in the political scene. The purpose of the civil society organizations formed at the time of the demonstrations of the “*indignados*” is to replace the traditional parties in the management of the old politics.

The major difference between the classic workers movement and the mesocratic civil society movement is rooted precisely in the disinterest of the latter in the economy and in its exclusive devotion to political action. Having emerged from the shadow of the State, it has a blind faith in the State, and is incapable of conceiving any other form of social engagement besides working through its institutions. Its specific interests, although it refers to them as “the interests of the citizens”, are nothing but the preservation of the status of its supporters, which it thinks it can guarantee thanks to the State. Its objectives will not be attained with the diminution of the State apparatus, but with its even more pronounced development. The contradiction lies in the fact that the contemporary State is the slave of the markets, or, more accurately, it is a cornerstone of the industrialization and financialization of the world. And it is just this industrialization and this globalization of financial flows that are responsible for the crisis that led to the political upheaval of the salaried middle classes. As a result, the civil society movement, insofar as it is embedded in the structures of the State, is compelled to act in such a way as to augment those structures, that is, to act in opposition to its own “class” interests. This is why its political action, with the few successes to which it can lay claim, takes the form of gestures, symbolic demonstrations and proclamations made in the democratic language of the liberal bourgeoisie of old. In short, the civil society movement has not implied, nor will it imply, any real change, or even a convincing spectacle of change.

As the tiny, self-proclaimed revolutionary groups stagnate and become fossilized, the revolutionary objectives to which they lay claim become empty words, lifeless truths and ritual formulas. The old doctrinaire analyses are left behind by reality and the old interpretive frameworks fall to pieces, devoid of

meaning. Their ideologies, for the most part workerist, nationalist, green or feminist, are incapable of rationally explaining the course of development of the world, since the world is changing at a rapid pace and new developments are taking place that these ideologies cannot comprehend. These ideological discourses are plagued by clichés and artificial extremism; the roads they propose to follow lead nowhere; the strident manner in which they are expressed can hardly conceal the absence of any possible alternatives; the strategies that they offer are nothing but ridiculous imitations of the past. For all intents and purposes, these ideologies have grown old and become obsolete, while capitalism, to our regret, only becomes more mature.

It is not our intention to deny the evidence that major conflicts are occurring, although these conflicts do not take the form of subversive movements on any significant scale, nor is it our desire to disparage the existence of focal points of resistance at the margins of politics, or to ignore the spaces that are foreign to the functioning of capital where experiments in non-consumerist ways of life are taking place. The social struggle exists, it is just that struggles are not capable of spreading and their objectives do not exceed certain limits, that is, they do not question everything they should question. Thus, the world of radical protest is not developing as a counter-society within mainstream society. There is too much distrust of the idea of organization, too much short-term commitment, and too much inclination to remain in a kind of ghetto. These tendencies dovetail quite nicely with activism lacking any long-term perspectives, verbal radicalism, fashionable identity politics and vague utopianism. The milieu of radical protest give the impression of being the habitat of the juvenile middle class in its first extremist stage.

A recapitulation of all of the above observations leads us once again to the need for the revolution that will put an end to capitalism and finish off its intolerable way of life, and once again the real problem is posed, that of critical thought. It is not that we have to journey through a trackless desert of theory, for, despite a certain degree of confusion in these fields that has resulted from a certain kind of narrow-mindedness, there are valuable elements such as ecological critique, the anti-development analysis, anthropological studies, and value theory. But there is still a lot to be done if we do not want to see these contributions degenerate into conciliatory ideologies or fuel for sectarianism. We need a rigorous historical vision, but one that is free of deterministic characteristics, a new critique of post-structuralism, and the recycling of antiquated ideologies, a unitary language that would characterize it, an effective demolition of salvationist myths, beginning with the biggest myth of all, the myth of the State, etc. Only an authentic revolutionary thought will be able to

name its friends and its enemies by precisely delimiting the terrain of contemporary struggles, clarifying tactics and strategies that will help to overcome the enormous obstacles that stand in our way, and bringing everything together into a single project. When one works for the overthrow of a regime one must be clear about what it is that one wants to put in its place.

Miguel Amorós, September 11, 2018.

Source: [LibCom.org](https://libcom.org)



Miguel Amorós (photo Victor Arias), may 2023.

# The new clothes of capitalist developmentalism

*The new green period of capitalism and its ecological and citizen vanguard*

The capitalist world is debating itself in an unprecedented ecological crisis that threatens its continuity as a system based on the pursuit of private profit. From the pollution of air, water and soil to the accumulation of waste and rubbish; from the depletion of natural resources to the extinction of species; from the urbanizing tide to climate change; it seems that a sword of Damocles hangs over market society. Leaders from all spheres of activity are concerned about unstoppable environmental degradation, including a reorganization of production and consumption according to inevitable ecological imperatives. Many people are convinced that the capitalist system of exploitation cannot be maintained in any other way. The contradiction between growth (the accumulation of capital) and its destructive effects (the ecological disaster), will have to be overcome with a compromise between industry and nature, or better between their respective spectacular representation: on the one hand, the high executives and on the other, the patented ecologists. We are entering a new period of capitalism, the “green” stage, where new gadgets and technological systems – “renewable” energy plants, electric cars, GMOs, big data, 5G networks, etc. – will try to harmonize economic development with the territory and the resources it contains, thus facilitating “sustainable” growth and making the current, motorised and consumerist way of life compatible with the natural environment, or better yet, with what remains of it. The “energy transition” is but one aspect of the “economic transition” towards ecocapitalism, which, starting from the wild (neoliberal) incorporation of nature into the market, now reaches a phase where commodification will be regulated by corporate and state mechanisms. It is an industrial, financial and political operation of great importance that is going to change everything so that nothing changes, so that everything remains the same.

The new technologies introduced after 1945, in the postwar period, (manufacture of cements, fertilizers, additives and detergents, more powerful engines, additives, thermal power stations, “atoms for peace”, etc.) were the

factors that triggered the plundering of resources, the emission of pollutants and metropolitanisation, exponentially increasing the power of transnational corporations. Economic growth became a destructive element of the first order, but also, the major cause of social stabilisation, of a much greater efficiency than the unions or the workers parties. Consequently, developmentalism came to shape the policies of all kinds of governments. Employment was the worker's only means of gaining the status of consumer, motorist and inhabitant of the periphery, so that the creation of jobs then became the primary objective of the "political class", both right-wing and left-wing. The immediate interests of the wage-earning masses integrated in the market were aligned with those of the businessmen and the parties, to the point of firmly opposing any ecological corrective that endangered growth and, consequently, jobs. Ultimately, "dying of cancer is preferable to dying of starvation," as some said. Unfortunately, workers have been strong supporters of business continuity, urbanisation and parliamentarianism, not caring about the negative impact this could have on their environment, their freedom or their lives. That is why the ecological conscience has crystallised almost exclusively in sectors that are inactive or almost so, such as academics, neo-rurals, the precarious, students or pensioners. The fight against noxiousness has before it a social barrier that is difficult to overcome as long as the defence of the workplace is a priority for the majority of the population; if the contradiction is not overcome, the defence of the institutions will take precedence over the defence of the territory and the autonomy of the struggles.

Faced with a politically and socially blocked situation, the international ruling class takes the initiative by trying to direct the long march of the techno-industrial economy towards profitable "sustainability" for its own benefit and without real opposition, either by eliminating old jobs, or by creating new ones. The destruction continues and even increases, but it is certainly about saving capitalism, not the planet. Extractive ecology produces profits even in the short term; however, markets are not strong enough to initiate a process of "green" reconversion, nor are technological innovations alone, in view of which the first steps depend largely on the State. It is up to the State to channel the protests, encourage the formation of a pragmatic ecological elite and pave the way for the new green capitalism, if necessary by promulgating a "climate state of emergency". As a result, the ecological crisis – which today is presented as a climate issue – becomes trivially political. Meanwhile, the environmental movement is infiltrated by agents of the multinationals and bought with funds of various origins, resulting in a political network of influences at the service of a new kind of capitalism. The same thing happened with the NGOs. At that



moment, the purge of extremisms is necessary for the transformation of the green party of decomposition into an instrument of the dominant order. The message of moderation obedient to the little belligerent slogans would not reach the manipulable masses if the anti-system “fundamentalists” were not isolated as soon as possible, or as the informal hierarchies of ecologism-spectacle say, “bridged”.

The movement against climate change has given rise to a registered “brand”, Extinction/Rebellion, which covers the environmentalist flank of left-wing citizenry, giving it arguments in favour of the State mediation of the crisis. Those who appeal to the State certainly cannot be branded as “radicals,” since while they are against “extinction,” they are not against capital. Nor against anyone concretely responsible; one of its principles reads as follows: “we avoid accusing and pointing at people, because we live in a toxic system”. No concrete individual (no leader) can be considered guilty of anything. For a socially ambitious mentality, not all leaders, not all capitalists, are equal, and ecological reforms can even be beneficial to the majority. They are potential allies and benefactors. Thus, the declared objectives of eco-citizenship do not go that way. They limit themselves to pressuring governments to force them to “tell the truth to the citizens”, to take “decarbonizing” measures foreseen in the “energy transition” and to decree the creation of “supervising citizens’ assemblies”, true political springboards for the new politicians. Their weapon: the non-violent mobilization of 3.5% of the “citizens”. No revolutions, because they imply violence and do not respect “democracy”, that is, the system of parties and ranks. They do not want to put an end to the capitalist regime, they want to transform it, making it “circular” and “carbon neutral”. We will not overlook the fact that the majority of waste is irrecyclable and that the production of “clean” energies implies the consumption of enormous quantities of fossil fuels. The professionals of citizen ecology do not want to destroy the State either, the great tree under whose shadow their personal careers thrive and their placement strategies work. The ecological crisis is reduced by this captive ecologism to a political problem that can be solved from the heights thanks to a Roosevelt-style Green New Deal: a new pact for the global economy between the world’s ruling class, the political bureaucracy and its environmental advisors that imposes measures for the reduction of polluting emissions and the storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide that the multiple conferences on climate change have failed to impose. Something extremely suspicious, like everything that comes from the system. The “dual” citizen strategies are “symbiotic”, not rupturing. Ecosystems would be restored by harmonizing conflicting interests from within. Duality consists precisely in collaborating (acting in symbiosis)

with the institutions on the one hand, and mobilising the catastrophe-sensitive masses on the other. However, the mobilisations are nothing more than a spectacular display of purely symbolic support. They do not aspire to much, as they do not question the status quo, not saying a word about the symbiosis of governments with those who are pressured by markets, growth or globalisation.

It has been proven that since the Johannesburg summit in 2002, if not before, the capitalist world is aware that its uncontrolled functioning produces such a level of destruction that it is in danger of collapsing. It is more than evident that despite the resistance to regulation by countries whose stability and influence depend on hard extractivism or unhindered development, capitalism as a whole has entered a green developmental phase and is trying to establish controls (Agenda 21, creation of the Green Climate Fund, fifth IPCC report, Paris Agreement, the 24 different COPs). This explains the epidemic of realism and opportunism that has taken over the ecological media “in action” to the point of provoking an avalanche of demands for employment in the political-administrative field. The militants do not want to close their doors, especially when there is a good remuneration, so that all the ideals are kept in their pockets. In truth, it is not only the capitalists who would benefit from a State of emergency. The new subsidized ecologism follows in the wake of “green” developmentism based on “renewable” industrial energies, and sustains the alarmist leaders of capitalism against the negationists. All their efforts are devoted to adjusting the industrial and consumerist way of life with the preservation of the natural environment, despite the fact that the results have not been flattering until today: greenhouse gas emissions, far from being reduced as established by international agreements, have reached record figures. With the optimism of a newly enlightened novice, they want economic growth, necessary for the survival of capitalism, and the territory, necessary for the conservation of biodiversity, at least in appearance, to be marvelous, no matter how much the global temperature continues to rise and the climate is degraded. Incomparable advantages of the symbiotic method and the reformist narrative!

Those responsible for global warming and pollution, and those responsible for precariousness and exclusion are the same, but those who fight them are often not. They are two battlefields, the one of imbalance and the one of inequality, which do not cease to converge and not because a cohort of vocational bureaucrats appears under the stones, trying to carve out a future for themselves by acting as an intermediary. Aspiring leaders have their days numbered because ordinary people lose their meekness when their means of subsistence are affected and they no longer allow themselves to be domesticated with the ease of the days of abundance in less aggressive climates. The weakness

of world-capital lies not in the climate, not even in health, but in supplies. The day when the techno-industrial system – either from the markets, or from the State – stops satisfying the needs of a large part of the population, or in other words, when due to the climate or any other factor the supply fails, the era of insurrections will come. A failed system that hinders the mobility of its subjects and puts them in immediate danger of starvation is a dead system. It is probable that in the heat of the protest, community structures will be recomposed, fundamental to ensure the autonomy of the revolts. If civil society succeeds in organizing itself on the margins of institutions and bureaucracies, then ecological struggles will converge with wage struggles, as reflected in the praxis of a unified social conscience. And that slogan heard in the French rebellion of the “yellow vests”: “end of the month, end of the world” will reveal all its meaning.

Miguel Amorós.

Talks on 12 May 2019 at the book exchange fair in L’Orxa (Alicante) and on 18 May at the Biblioteca Social El Rebrot Bord, Albaida (Valencia).

Source: [Autonomies](#)

Original text:

**“Los trajes nuevos del desarrollismo capitalista”**

## The anti-industrial perspective in disaster capitalism

Anti-industrialism is not a new ideology born in an intellectual circle, a university chair or an altruistic foundation during the historical period of Capital's merger with the State. It does not proclaim particular principles invented by some enlightened thinker, nor does it offer infallible formulas with which to solve all social ills. And above all, it does not appeal to the parliaments or to the "citizens" that support them. It is a critical analysis that emerged during the decline of the labor movement that starts from the industrial nature of all economic and social activities. If the material conditions of existence determine reality, these are now those of the industry. The globalized world resembles a gigantic factory, although there are fewer and fewer factories per se. Technology has multiplied productivity while considerably reducing the importance of the industrial proletariat, but proletarianization has spread like oil over water: the proletarian condition characterizes not only the life of almost all humanity, but that of the entire planet.

Capital turns into commodities not only the labor force, but also the territory and the neighborhood. Consequently, the greatest contradictions occur in the field of daily life and the environment. Logically, the conflict moves from the sphere of production to that of consumption and, from there, the collective groups become aware of the deep antagonisms that face the capitalist regime, with nature and the population subjected to increasingly atrocious survival conditions. In every apparently trivial act such as eating, living, traveling, dressing, breathing, taking care of oneself, voting, working, reading, communicating, having fun, etc., the dominance of capital is manifested and, therefore, in each act one must take sides. It is true that the workers' identity of yesteryear disappeared, but class consciousness reappears and reaffirms itself in the revolts of everyday life.

The class struggle goes beyond the narrow framework of labor demands to encompass the defense of the territory and the whole of daily activity. Capitalism is replicated in its terrain, that is, everywhere. Capitalism destroys the environment, exploits and plunder the territory, pollutes the air, pollutes the waters and soils, concentrates the population in cubicles within urban complexes, annihilates traditional agriculture, forces constant mobilization, abandons the

elderly, it brutalizes and weakens the population, develops mechanisms of totalitarian control, provokes wars, camouflages itself with ecology as a green capitalism. Thus, the fronts of combat are multiple, but there is only one struggle. Capitalist globalization is based on complex social relations, but precisely that complexity makes its foundations increasingly fragile and disasters become more frequent. The social base of capitalism, made up of the new middle classes of officials, employees, and integrated (submissive) workers, is eroding and narrowing. The citizenship ideology that belongs to them is cracking. Contradictions are impossible to disguise, so social uprisings are already inevitable. When flammable material builds up to uncontrollable proportions, a spark from anywhere can cause a serious fire. We are in those, in the final phase of globalization that we could well describe as catastrophic capitalism.

Anomie and catastrophe are today the main results of industrial production, and, according to the intrinsic nature of capital, they are a new growth factor and a new source of profit.

However, social inequalities are soaring and citizenship is discredited, so that disaster and decomposition also become insurrectional stimuli. An casual vent such as, for example, a case of police brutality, the rise in the price of gasoline, the increase in the cost of public transport, the privatization of a health service, a mining exploration, a hydrological plan, a liberticidal law, etc., may lead to spontaneous mobilizations and uncontrollable riots. Any wrong move by governments can lead to a crisis, be it urban, ecological, racial or health, and any crisis can be at the center of the social question. A social force sufficiently freed from the inability to understand its misery, and therefore subversive enough to venture into a process of radical social transformation is still a far away. But it will come. There will simply have to be a power vacuum for the creation of social and radical force. If we are sure of anything, it is that the seductive capacity of capitalism, that kind of general voluntary submission that it has been able to use until today, is diluted with the catastrophe. Capitalism suppressed real freedom in exchange for open-ended amusement and relative security. The crises, insofar as they neutralize the forces of order, are indicating to us that the fun is with the disobedient assemblies, and security is in the dissolution of all kinds of police and the abolition of digital surveillance. We are not talking about anything other than the self-management of everyday life.

Something can teach us, for example, the outrage of the health workers gathered at the doors of Spanish hospitals, or the debates of the French yellow vests concentrated in the roundabouts, or the protesters from Chile, or the good government boards of Chiapas, or the riots in a dozen countries.

The protest movements, by distrusting the institutional channels, and therefore, of the dialogue with the State, are forced to create autonomous spaces for discussion and decision-making, and to defend them. Assemblies, concentrations, councils, coordinations, committees, pickets, etc., are bodies created to deliberate independently on their problems, truthfully report on them and carry out the agreed points. In a Greek sense, they would be spaces and non-virtual mechanisms of freedom, since freedom is nothing other than the right of the masses to participate directly in the management and resolution of matters that concern or affect them. As soon as the joy of being together led to a passion for freedom and that passion spread — and with it the awareness of one's own strength — those spaces would consolidate, forging within them a new feeling of class. We would then be in a situation of dual power. Today, we are not, but this is only the beginning. It will appear that the covid-19 pandemic has aborted the process of rebellion, in the light of the wave of voluntary servitude and the suffocating climate of submission that can be observed throughout Mesocratic Europe, especially in Spain where the radical potential is at a minimum. Fear represses life and calms anger, it cannot move things so far towards peacemaking. The catastrophe continues and so does the revolt. The best is yet to come.

Miguel Amorós, June 11, 2020.

[Beyond the Dark Horizon](#), Vol. 2, Viral edition, 2020.

*Art, poetry, rants and ideas from the frontlines of green  
anarchist direct action in 'so-called Australia' and beyond.*

## The likely causes of the rise of the extreme right in the capitalist world

The most striking political phenomenon of our recent era, which some rightly call the era of authoritarian leaders, is the rise of the extreme right in the partycratic/party-dominated capitalist countries. Some prefer to call it the radical, ultra-nationalist or populist new right, and the more belligerent, the neo-fascist right. For some reason, a disappointed and angry crowd, some of them workers, who feel hurt, discriminated against or insufficiently cared for by the institutions they had trusted, turn to this political option. Neither Franco, nor Hitler, nor Mussolini have been resurrected, even if historical revisionism casts their regimes in a nostalgic light and encourages a relative understanding. This is a very modern phenomenon. For a better understanding of it, it is necessary to study the context in which it has occurred in order to reveal one by one the factors that have contributed to its emergence and development. First of all, the disappearance of the labour movement.

In the Spanish state, at least since the eighties of the last century, we can speak neither of a workers' movement, nor of proletarian autonomy, nor of class consciousness. The wage increases achieved in the previous decade, the fear of unemployment, added to the intervention of the trade unions organised under the government umbrella, which monopolised negotiation and disarticulated the mechanisms of workers' assemblies, provoked a wave of conformism so generalised that it determined a declassification that was impossible to reverse. The preponderance of the tertiary sector, the automation of production processes, industrial reconversion, the relocation of the working masses to the periphery of the large cities and the economic growth related to the first phases of globalisation, made possible a consumerist atmosphere that gave rise to a new salaried middle class. It was the end of the autonomous workers' movement. The new lifestyle created an individualistic and competitive mentality far removed from the values that once characterised the working class. Private life then completely displaced social life, allowing trade unionism and politics to become professionalised and corrupted, integrating it into the world of the commodity as a well-paid job and an opportunity for social advancement, always, of course, at the service of the dominant interests.

The immersion in private life, the social isolation typical of suburban metropolitan blocks, indifference towards politics – translated into passive acceptance of the parliamentary system –, indebtedness and concern for security were the traits that best defined the new middle class, or rather, the “cautious majority”, as the advisors of the last socioliberal president would later call it. The level of income was secondary, as it hardly altered the mesocratic ideology: even today, when the real middle class is impoverishing by leaps and bounds, 60% of the population considers itself a member of that class and only 10% perceives itself as working class. The middle class factor has been a determining factor in the social paralysis that has been maintained even in a situation of clear inequality and degradation of the so-called “welfare state” or “rule of law”, or more specifically, in the deterioration of the public services that justified the paternal rule of the state. Fear paralyzes and that is the great passion of a class that ignored solidarity and did not know what to do with freedom. Panic feeds its ghosts, against which the demand for protection against any real or imaginary enemy is at the forefront of its demands.

The hegemony of the middle class had not only practical consequences, such as the abandonment of anti-capitalism in popular media, but also ideological ones, with the catch-all concept of ‘citizenship’, the new imaginary political subject of leftist discourse. Quirky curiosities common in American universities, such as *queer* creed, deep ecology, intersectionality and critical race theory, spread across Europe with incredible speed in post-modern social movements and politics, until their vocabulary penetrated the common language of activists *a la page* and hip politicians. The demolition of the notions of class, reason, revolution, emancipation, alienation, mutual support, proletariat, memory, communism, etc., allowed nonsense, contradiction and delirium to take root in speculative thinking and militant language, encouraging all kinds of irrational and sectarian behaviour. The exploitative enemy was no longer the oppressive bourgeoisie and the state; under the new progressive parameters it was the heterosexual, omnivorous white male, potential racist and rapist. The class struggle was replaced by the gender struggle. The sense of identity replaced proletarian consciousness, and the idea of ‘diversity’ that of universality. Workers’ pickets and strikes were relegated to the *escrache* and the “culture of cancellation”. The defence of territory was seen as a struggle against patriarchy... and so on and so forth. In two decades of petty-bourgeois post-modernity, a complete cultural counter-revolution took place. The revolutions that served as historical pillars for the protests ceased to be references. In short, free, rational and revolutionary thinking was liquidated in favour of *woke* doctrine. Financial domination is so consolidated that today it does not need reasons; it is enough to have unreason on its side.



The financial crisis of 2008 shook capitalist society to its foundations. The state's preference for the banks and the inadequacy of social palliatives led to a major disaffection with the mainstream parties, undoubtedly the main factor in the right-wing upsurge. The decline and discrediting of the governments brought about by the party game, typified and labelled as 'representative democracy' or simply 'democracy', was manifest. The middle class – especially its low-income and poorly educated sectors – reacted harshly against the financial elite, the government and the Cortes by supporting critical parties improvised by the right and the left, and promoted by the media with great fanfare. It did not take long for them to be assimilated by the system they wanted to regenerate. The spectacle of renewal managed to avert the political crisis for the time being; the economic crisis was contained in a bad way with the reduction of public spending and attempts to 'green' the reconversion of production and consumption. The farce was short-lived as the migration crisis of 2015 and the pandemic episode hastened its end. The general discontent caused by the difficulty of finding work, precarious jobs, housing prices, lack of health care, minuscule pensions, petrol prices, etc., only accentuated the disaffection with politics and reinforced the conviction among the affected population that parliamentarianism had failed and no longer worked. Thanks to a prolonged crisis, apparently with no way out, the secret of the political elite became public: it was nothing more than a *caste* with its own interests, alien to those of its voters, but closely linked to the survival of capitalism. The consequences of the malaise and frustration were immediately felt with high levels of abstention and the emergence of populist parties that exploited the sense of insecurity of the frightened population and launched slogans made up with the *woke* clichés of the post-modern left turned inside out. If political correctness, climate alarmism and inclusive language were already part of the ruling class, insult, denialism and sexism will be the anti-establishment language of the present. This is the understanding of the new populous, which is quite adept at making its own the social demands that the classic parties and trade unions, too embedded in the structures of power, have neglected.

Misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and racism will come to adorn, without much originality, a discourse that vindicates the traditional family, the Catholic religion, biological gender, property, Spanishness and patriotic myths. With the universalist ideals of the working class disappearing, their place is being taken by nationalist identity projects, openly xenophobic, hostile to cultural pluralism and vernacular languages. In them, the foreigner is the supreme enemy, the greatest threat to identity; particularly, if he is a Muslim. The extreme poverty brought about by globalisation and geopolitics in many countries has pushed

scores of immigrants into the capitalist metropolises, where they will survive on the junk jobs that nobody wants, filling the gaps left in their retirement by an ageing working population. The racialisation of the proletariat has been another factor explaining the rise of the far right, for it has not only provided the *lumpenbourgeois* masses with an ideal scapegoat, the undocumented migrant, alleged criminal, but also diverts attention from the real enemy, the capitalist ruling class and its political auxiliaries.

The presence of other, more effective models of capitalism such as Russia's and China's, under the tutelage of strongmen supported either by powerful police and military apparatuses or by tentacular political-administrative bureaucracies, has been a source of inspiration and a point of reference for dissidents from conventional conservatism and other anti-progressive 'alternative democrats'. That is why they are in favour of not aligning themselves with US foreign policy. For post-ideological authoritarian thinking, the uselessness of parliaments extends to the uselessness of parties, trade unions and guaranteeing laws, while the wreckage of Keynesian and Thatcherite economic liberalism means that the political direction of the economy must be placed in the hands of a providential leader in good relations with Russia, Iran and China. However, the extreme right is not radically anti-European, nor does it proclaim itself against the parliamentary system: it is inclined to change the EU and parliaments from within and little by little. In institutional matters it is rather moderate, as it wants to be above all a party of order. To achieve this, it must win elections and make agreements. Once again, technology will provide the necessary tools to make the *ultra* strategy a reality: social networks. It will be the definitive factor.

The networks have played the same role that radio once played in the rise of the Nazi party. In the last ten years, information and politics have undergone a profound transformation thanks to the platforms' algorithms. The influence of the official press has plummeted. The understanding of time has become obscured: the future, the place of utopias, no longer counts; the past, as the repository of a Golden Age of choice, serves only to legitimise the chosen identity. The present is the hegemonic time; the world of networks has become furiously presentist. In the society of ignorant immediacy, the *citizenship* of post-leftism has become a digital multitude, a mass that is informed, nourished and coordinated in cyberspace *in real time*. The occasion, which also opened the door to exhaustive social control, was seized politically by the emerging leftist movements, but it was the post-fascist pages that ended up taking the cake. Their fusion with networks and applications will give birth to a monster that will be impossible to stop. In the cyberworld, aberrant and irrational content attracts much more attention, as it provokes emotional reactions, controversy and outrage. This is why disinformation,

rumours, lies, plots and hoaxes are now becoming a reality on the web: they provide disgruntled virtual communities with new keys for interpreting reality. *Fake news* spreads six times faster than true information. So there is then a disenchanted and resentful populace that hates politicians (especially the former anti-system co-opted by power, the entrenched leftists) and is increasingly receptive to arguments that come from a parallel reality to the one described by pro-government journalists, making it easily manipulated by experts in chaos. Information and politics have taken a quantum leap in falsification as historical consciousness has marched backwards. Stripped of memory and prey to algorithms, the *people* are not what they used to be. And nor is popular rage.

Without effective dikes and favoured by the crisis – economic, environmental, political, cultural – the far-right tide will continue to gain support among small farmers, the impoverished middle class and the excluded white workers living in small towns, on the outskirts of big cities and in de-industrialised areas. It is taking over the social base of the old Stalinism, politically liquidated after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Paradoxically, the extreme right is less frightening than the *establishment*. The new European path, forced by the future catastrophe, has similar features to those advocated by extremism. The unlikely exit calls for deregulatory measures on environmental issues, austerity policies, import tariffs, changes in defence plans (especially regarding Ukraine), alternatives to impoverishment and restrictive precepts on migration and freedoms, which can only be accommodated within a nationalist retreat. If the radical right triumphs, the controlled dismantling of the European Union – the dream of the enlightened bourgeoisie victorious over Nazism –, will loom on the horizon. The political foundation that sustained it, the Washington-blessed alliance between social democrats and conservatives, will be in tatters. In terms of real power, it would mean that part of the transnational executives are considering the continuation of the Europeanist project in their own guise, for the older project is becoming onerous and politically less and less viable. With its end, a new capitalist cycle and a new chapter of bourgeois domination would come to an end. For those resistant to disaster, the outlook is daunting, but unstable to the point that all possible ways out are possible. Including the best ones.

Miguel Amorós, June 22, 2024.

Source: [Autonomies](#)

Original text:

**“Las causas probables del ascenso de  
la extrema derecha en el mundo capitalista”**

## What is Anarchism?

Is it a doctrine, an ideology, a method, a branch of socialism, a line of conduct, a political theory? The answer, in principle, is easy: anarchism is what anarchists think and do, and, in general, it is those who define themselves as enemies of all authority and imposition. Those who, in various ways, many of them truly antagonistic, pursue “anarchy”, that is, a society without government, a mode of social coexistence outside of authoritarian arrangements. Anarchism would be nothing more than the way to realise this anarchy, which the geographer Élisée Reclus called “the highest expression of order”. What does it consist of? There are multiple and contradictory strategies to achieve an ideal based on a negation, of which there are several versions and which is why one could speak more appropriately of *anarchisms*, as for example, [Tomás Ibáñez](#) does. If we also take into account the contemporary social-historical situation, in which anarchism is no longer significant, being today barely a sign of youthful and semi-academic identity that bears little relation to more glorious past eras and which remains sheltered from any serious and objective criticism, the definitions could go on *ad infinitum*. Anarchism would then be a kind of sack full of disparate formulas labelled as anarchist. The doors remain open to any shift or movement, be it reformist, individualist, catholic, communist, nationalist, contemplative, mystical, conspiratorial, avant-garde, etc. On the good-natured giddiness in the libertarian milieu resulting from such diversity, we could conclude in the same way as do the author or authors of the pamphlet, “[On the Poverty of Student Life](#)” (1966), speaking about the members of the *Fédération Anarchiste*: “Since they tolerate each other, they would *tolerate anything*.” The outlook is not rosy, for in this day and age, understanding social phenomena and the ideologies that go with them depends very much on thinking about them properly, that is, from the perspective provided by historical knowledge. Even today, anarchism is not lacking in honest and competent intellectuals up to the task. However, the most common characteristic of postmodern anarchisms, those that navigate in post-truth and repudiate coherence, is the rejection of such knowledge. Moreover, according to such anarchism, the past has to be intervened in from the present, as a chest of aesthetic resources, in line with playful normativity, transgender grammar and fashionable gastronomic habits. The commitment, moreover, is ephemeral. In short, what we have, with the voluntary exception of a few syndicalist nuclei, is

anarchism reduced to a book fair phenomenon. We, who are moving in the opposite direction, will try to explain this constant aspiration for a social organisation without government, then without a state, without separate authority, by referring to its origins where they are to be found, in the radical sectors of the popular revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In principle, we will have to overcome the mania of some anarchist ideologists, starting with Peter Kropotkin, Reclus, Rudolf Rocker and the historian Max Nettlau, to discover ancestors in every moment of history and in every place. From this point of view anarchism would not be a new idea, but something as old as humanity, perennial, eternal, inscribed in the biological being of the human species. Anarchists would therefore be Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno the Stoic, Lao Tse, Epicurus, Rabelais, Montaigne or Tolstoy. Libertarian traces would be found in the medieval communes, in the English Diggers, in the philosophical liberalism of Spencer and Locke, in the political work of John Stuart Mill and William Godwin, in any alteration of the established order... We have no objection to this, but we denounce the latent attempt in this anti-historical approach to fabricate an inter-class ideology, and to deny the workers' movement its decisive role in the genesis of anarchist ideas. This had disastrous effects on anti-authoritarian practice. The promoters and advocates of this thesis sought to transcend social reality not through practical interventions in the socio-political sphere, but through propaganda, through an intensive mass education effort that could bring about a gradual evolution of the people's mentality towards higher levels of consciousness. For the educationalist propagandists, especially for the more immobile and entrenched ones – take Abad de Santillán, for example – anarchism was simply “a humanist yearning”, the new name for “a basic humanist attitude and conception”, a non-specific and non-concrete doctrine, a vague ethical ideal which has always existed, which existed in every social class and which – Federica Montseny added – had found in the Iberian Peninsula the tradition, the racial temperament and the fierce love of freedom in greater abundance than anywhere else. In the prologue to a book by the statist Fidel Miró, Santillán said with calculated ambiguity that “anarchism aims at the defence, dignity and freedom of man in all circumstances, in all political systems, yesterday, today and tomorrow [...] it is not linked to any type of political construction, nor does it propose a system to replace them.” It was thus not a homogeneous but a plural, hybrid project, on whose foundations, if we are to believe the suspicious Gaston Leval, who proposed to give a “scientific basis” to anarchism, reinforcing “constructive” realism in politics and economics, there was no agreement “among the most able theorists in this field” regarding its aims and

strategies of realisation. (“Precisiones del Anarquismo”, 1937) The speculations of the leading lights of orthodox anarchism in Spain in 1936 all flowed into the clichés of political liberalism, which is understandable as it illustrated the extreme adaptability of their convictions to bourgeois republican principles and institutions.

Rudolf Rocker saw in anarchism the confluence of two intellectual currents propelled by the French Revolution: socialism and liberalism. Let us note that one was proletarian, the other bourgeois. However, this confluence did not constitute a fixed social system but “a clear tendency in the development of humanity which [...] aspires to the free development of all social forces in life”. (“Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice”).

Albert Libertad, the editor of the individualist magazine “L’Anarchie”, was not satisfied with that: “For us, the anarchist is the one who has overcome in himself the subjective forms of authority: religion, fatherland, family, human respect or whatever you like, and who does not accept anything that has not passed through the sieve of his reason as far as his knowledge allows him.” Anarchy could only be “the philosophy of free examination, which imposes nothing by authority, and which seeks to prove everything by reasoning and experience.”

For Sébastien Faure, anarchy “as a social ideal and as an effective realisation, corresponds to a *modus vivendi* in which, freed from all legal and collective subjection to public force, the individual will have no other obligations than those imposed on him by his own conscience”. His compatriot Janvion declared anarchism to be “the absolute negation of the authority of man over man”; Emma Goldman went further by enshrining the individual as the measure of all things: “Anarchism is the only philosophy which restores to man self-consciousness, which maintains that God, the State and Society do not exist, that they are empty and worthless promises, since they can be achieved only through the subordination of man.” Although in an abstract way, she alluded to issues such as production and sharing, she does not specify what such terms mean. In her little book “[Anarchism. What it Really Stands For](#)” she wrote: “Anarchism [is] the philosophy of a new social order based on unrestricted freedom, the theory that all governments rest on violence and are therefore equivocal and dangerous, as well as unnecessary. [...] Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life...”

Soledad Gustavo stated tersely that anarchy was “the genuine expression of total freedom” and Federica Montseny, who did not forget her working-class

audience, pointed out what her mother had said: “anarchism is a doctrine based on the freedom of man, on the pact or free agreement of man with his fellows, and on the organisation of a society in which there should be neither classes nor private interests, nor coercive laws of any kind” (“What is anarchism?”) In view of Montseny’s practice as an anarchist, José Peirats asked in his little dictionary of anarchism whether anarchy “is an idea that can be framed in the revolutionary political recipe book or is it a vaporous mass that is diluted when we try to grasp it?” He feared that it was no more than “a diluted principle”, an ethereal slogan, and not, as his esteemed Emma Goldman said, “the conclusion arrived at by hosts of intellectual men and women the world over; a conclusion resulting from the close and studious observation of the tendencies of modern society”, or in the words of Élisée Reclus, “the practical end, actively sought by multitudes of men united in resolutely collaborating in the birth of a society where there are no masters...”

Despite the undeniably crucial role of the anarchist masses in the revolutions of the last century, no matter how much we search through classic anarchist literature, we will find few references to revolution as a means of transforming society. Because of the violent implications it necessarily contains, it contradicted the pacifist postulates of the ideology, which, let us not forget, is often presented as an ethical ideal, not an imposed one; or as a moral rebellion (Errico Malatesta), a liberated subjectivity (Libertad), “a conduct within any regime” (Felipe Alaiz)... Revolutionary boasts were typical of men of action, whose paradigm is Bakunin, more interested in defeating the oppressive side of reaction than in building a utopia by working from a desk according to uncontaminated guidelines. They conceived action primarily as struggle, combat, confrontation, not as pedagogy and experiment. Nevertheless, the epithet “anarchist” was historically used to qualify what conservative factions supposed to be revolutionary excesses. During the English Revolution, it was first used pejoratively against the “Levellers” and anyone who upset the established order and did not recognise the dominant power, particularly the ecclesiastical hierarchy (it was synonymous with radical, atheist or Anabaptist). During the French Revolution, the moderate republicans called anarchists all those who wanted to continue the revolutionary process rather than stop it, the Jacobins, the Enragés and the Hébertists. Finally, the first to define himself as an anarchist, in a positive sense, was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in his famous work [“What is property?”](#) and he called anarchy “the absence of masters and sovereigns, the form of government to which we are approaching”. He was also the first to claim the working class as an autonomous social force, opposed to the bourgeoisie. On other issues he was much less innovative. Shortly

afterwards, Anselme Bellegarrigue in his [Manifesto](#) of 1850 asserted that “anarchy is order, the state is civil war.” Max Nettlau introduced us to other revolutionaries active from the middle of the 19th century in favour of a socialism without rulers: Joseph Déjacque, Coeurderoy, Pisacane, Cesar De Paepe, Eugene Varlin, Ramon de la Sagra..., whom we could well consider as anarchists, even if they did not use that term. Therefore, we would not be wrong to define anarchism as an anti-authoritarian current of revolutionary socialism, the intellectual product of the incipient class struggle typical of capitalist society in the early stages of industrialisation.

In Proudhon’s correspondence we find the most complete statement of the ideal: “Anarchy is a form of government or constitution where the public or private conscience, moulded by the development of science and law, is alone sufficient to maintain order and to guarantee all liberties; where consequently the principle of authority, the institutions of police, the means of prevention or repression, the civil service, taxation, etc., are reduced to their minimum expression; where, a fortiori, monarchical forms and a high degree of centralisation disappear and are replaced by federative institutions and communal customs.”

The International Workingmen’s Association was a milestone in the organisation of the proletariat, giving it not only economic but also political objectives. The clashes between the various factions within it led to its decline. During the brief and intense period of the IWA, Bakunin was able to turn the underdeveloped libertarian socialism into a coherent and revolutionary political theory. The winds were blowing in favour of social revolution; Bakunin, in possession of an extraordinary store of historical and philosophical knowledge, did no more than translate it into practical ideas. The working class was the subject of the revolution, and therefore the battering ram of anti-authoritarianism, and which accordingly needed to outline strategic lines distinct from the social-democratic reformism characteristic of the Marxist tendency. For Bakunin, the working class was “the unrestricted manifestation of the liberated life of the people, from which freedom, justice, the new order and the very force of revolution from which must emerge.” Anarchy was thus the uncontrolled outburst of popular passions overcoming the obstacles of ignorance, submission and exploitation, which the agitators present in its midst would direct towards the destruction of all existing institutions. At the Congress of Saint-Imier in 1872, a proposition of his was voted: “The destruction of all political power is the first duty of the proletariat.” Unlike later ideologues, he was not interested in describing the new society in its various facets, the fruit of the entry of all workers into the International. It would be “a natural society



which would support and strengthen the life of all” and would consist of “a new organisation having no other basis than the interests, needs and natural inclinations of the peoples, and no other principle than the free federation of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces, of provinces into nations, in short, of these into the United States of Europe first, and later, of the whole world.” ([“The Programme of the International Brotherhood”](#))

The splits and expulsions in the International, the defeat of the Paris Commune, the crushing of the internationalist revolts in Spain, the failure of the peasant insurrection in Italy and the subsequent persecutions, broke the momentum of the workers’ movement, reducing it to small circles dedicated mainly to the diffusion of ideas. Kropotkin, Reclus, Malatesta and their comrades stood out in this. The death of Bakunin meant the virtual disappearance of his theoretical legacy. None of his followers ever read Hegel, Fichte, Feuerbach or Comte, and few were interested in Babeuf, Weitling or Proudhon. In this post-revolutionary period the term “anarchist” became widespread and a distinct ideology was properly created, external to the oppressed classes, which had to be taught through doctrinal propaganda and exemplary behaviour. It did not constitute a system as such, as was the case of Marxism. Furthermore, the elevation of Godwin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Stirner – authors who were not in favour of revolutions – to the saintly altar added conflicting elements to ideological reflection. Subaltern currents developed that were often opposed and incompatible: those that put the future society before the present, communism (to each according to his needs) before collectivism (to each according to his work), communalism before individualism, organisation before spontaneity, reflection before action, pacifism before violence, propaganda before expropriation or attack, legality before clandestine action, political parties before economic associations, etc. The confusion was such that a close intellectual, Octave Mirbeau, stated that “anarchists have broad shoulders; like paper, they can bear anything.” For others, indifferent to substance as much as to action, everything was anarchism. The main thing was the purpose; the means, often contradictory to it, were secondary. Tárrida del Mármol came up with the idea of “anarchism without adjectives”, with which the true expression of the revolutionary proletarian movement as reflected in the work of Bakunin and the anti-authoritarian International would be sacrificed on the altar of doctrinal, nebulous and sectarian interpretations of reality. Anarchism as an ideal of an emancipated society and at the same time a method of action, a simple variant of revolutionary socialism, did not seem to be enough. Gustav Landauer wanted to return to the basis when he wrote: “Anarchism is the goal we pursue, the absence of domination and the State; the

freedom of the individual. Socialism is the means by which we want to achieve and ensure that freedom.” Prince Kropotkin, on the other hand, set out to put the anarchist theoretical corpus in order, to find a philosophical basis other than Bakunin’s, to give it biological roots, to establish libertarian communism as its ultimate goal, and to spread a scientific optimism that took root more than anything else in the oppressed masses. He was the most widely read and influential author in the history of anarchism.

Kropotkin reshaped anarchism as a materialist, scientific, evolutionist, atheist and progressive philosophy, culminating in an ethics that he never finished. The English philosophers and the discoveries of 18<sup>th</sup> century science, and naturally Darwin, provided him with the material on which he built his ideological edifice, where scientific progress acquired the rank of a determining force instead of class struggle. In his pamphlet “[Modern Science and Anarchism](#)”, he said: “Anarchism is an attempt to apply to the study of the human institutions the generalizations gained by means of the natural-scientific inductive method; and an attempt to foresee the future steps of mankind on the road to liberty, equality, and fraternity, with a view to realizing the greatest sum of happiness for every unit of human society.” Elsewhere, in essay, he insisted on the same: “Anarchism is a world-concept based upon a mechanical explanation of all phenomena, embracing the whole of Nature — that is, including in it the life of human societies and their economic, political, and moral problems.” In his article for the [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#), he stuck to the classics and defined anarchism as “a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.”

Carlo Cafiero, a comrade to Bakunin, had a more dynamic concept of anarchism: “Anarchy today is an attack, a war against all authority, against all power, against all States. In future societies, anarchy will be a defense, the prevention brought against the reestablishment of all authority, of all power, of any State.” Anarchy and communism went hand in hand, as did the demand for freedom and the demand for equality (“[Anarchy and Communism](#)”, 1880). Nevertheless, the metaphysical distinction between libertarian communism and anarchy itself, that some made, required new clarifications. For Charles Malato, a disciple, anarchy was the complement of communism, “a state in which the governmental hierarchy is replaced by the free association of individuals and

groups; the law is imperative for all and voluntary contracts are of unlimited duration; the end of the hegemony of fortune and rank, by universalisation and well-being and the equivalence of functions, and finally, the present, hypocritically ferocious morality to be replaced by a higher morality which will naturally flow from the new order of things" ("Philosophy of Anarchism.") The absence of any indication of the way to reach this paradise of freedom is noteworthy; along with the way in which everyday action, not to speak of revolution, were bypassed. Agitators like Pelloutier and Pouget were perfectly aware of the danger of methodological vagueness concerning the daily struggle and invited anarchists to join the unions.

Malatesta chose a middle path that included, in addition to the strike, insurrection, and in addition labour unions, other factors of struggle. In the pages of "La Protesta" (Buenos Aires), he referred to the society of the future as "a rationally organised society in which no one has the means to subjugate and oppress others." And he defined anarchism as "the method to achieve anarchy by means of freedom, without government, without anyone – even someone with good intentions – imposing his will on others." He derived it from a single principle: love of humanity. According to Malatesta's humanist conception, one was an anarchist by feeling rather than by reasoned conviction, therefore, philosophy and science had little to do with it, no more than did historical development or economic conditions. It was a question of will. Anyone could be an anarchist, whatever their philosophical beliefs or scientific knowledge; it was enough to want to be one. He declared himself an anarcho-communist. Regarding anarchy, in the [pamphlet](#) of the same name, he described it as "the condition of a people who live without a constituted authority", "a society of free and equal members based on a harmony of interests and the voluntary participation of everybody in carrying out social responsibilities." Throughout his life, Malatesta had to speak a great deal about the ideal, anarchy, "a society founded on free agreement, where each individual could achieve the maximum possible development", which he did not distinguish from libertarian communism: "the organisation of social life by the work of free associations and federations of producers and consumers." In his last writings, he confirmed what he had been saying throughout his life: "anarchy is a way of social coexistence in which human beings live as brothers, without anyone oppressing or exploiting others and everyone having at their disposal the means that the civilization of the time grants to reach the highest level of moral and material development." Contrary to most of the ideal's propagators, Malatesta insisted that the way to achieve anarchy was through the organisation of anarchists around a programme, using the revolutionary arsenal to abolish the State and

“all political organisation based on authority.” The means had to be in accordance with the ends. If the latter were revolutionary, the former would have to be as well.

Anarchist militancy in labour unions shifted collective action into the sphere of the economy, further distancing itself from politics. The sowing of the ideal among the exploited had a spiritual child: revolutionary syndicalism. The Amiens Charter of 1906, its birth certificate, enshrined the primary function of syndicalism, not only in the struggle for better working conditions, but in the preparation “for integral emancipation, which can only be achieved through capitalist expropriation; it advocates the general strike as a means of action and considers that the union, today a resistance group, will in the future be the production and distribution organisation, the basis of social organisation.” In order to avoid any misunderstandings, one of the main theorists of this type of syndicalism, opposed to political and reformist syndicalism, Pierre Besnard, referred to the union as “the organic form that Anarchy takes to fight against capitalism.” In Spain, the country where the workers’ movement was most closely linked to anarchism, Salvador Seguí stated that the union was “the weapon, the instrument of anarchism, to put into practice the most immediate aspects of its doctrine.” Thus, it was more congruent to speak of anarcho-syndicalism, according to Rocker, another theorist and founder of the IWA of 1923, as “the result of the fusion of anarchism and revolutionary trade union action.” After Kropotkin and fifteen others joined the Allied side in the First World War, the anarchists had no choice but to force their anti-militarism, and the trade union confederation was the most suitable mass organisation to get anarchist ideas out of the metaphysical and warlike hole that it had been taken into. Concrete economic objectives such as the abolition of monopolies, the expropriation of land and the means of production, collective work, socialist distribution, the suppression of wages and money, etc., progressively displaced liberal rhetoric and the commonplaces of individualism, in the propaganda of the “idea.” Unfortunately, other themes such as the Magonist influence on the Mexican peasantry, the Workers’ Council as a class organization in the German revolution, the crushing of anarchism in Russia – particularly the defeat of the Makhnovist insurrectionary movement – or the Bolshevik splits in the anarchist workers’ movement in Latin America, had very little presence in the libertarian and syndicalist press. Anarchism was able to survive as a movement thanks to its connection with the workers, but except in Spain, it did not achieve sufficient strength to resist the onset of fascism.

In the 1920s, a covert war between syndicalist, communist and individualist anarchists was raging, blocking any attempt at specific organisation. The

remedy proposed by the Makhnovist exiles, the “Archinov platform”, was worse than the disease. An organisation resembling a political party inspired many misgivings about making its way into anarchist groups. Sébastien Faure proposed a “synthetic” organisation, which would leave things as they were. It was more of a non-aggression pact, a sweetening of the rarefied atmosphere in the style of anarchism “without adjectives”. His definition of anarchism was equal to his proposal: “it is the highest and purest expression of the reaction of the individual against the political, economic and moral oppression imposed upon him by all authoritarian institutions, and on the other hand, the firmest and most precise affirmation of the right of every individual to his integral development through the satisfaction of needs in all areas.” (“[The Anarchist Synthesis](#)”) But more or less banal discussions never left the libertarian milieu. Polemics about legality and pacifism were constant. Byzantine conflicts between communist purists and “exasperated liberals” (Georges Darien dixit) also did not cease to occur. Ideology set its traps. Chapels were often formed, secondary details and peripheral aspects were insisted upon, the self was apostatized in meetings that lasted to the point of boredom, principles were raised with paralyzing intent, the organisation was boycotted by branding it oppressive, any binding agreement was described as authoritarian and any historical reflection as useless... . There was simply too much mental confusion, too much narcissism, too many doctrinal dogmas and empty formulas, which by the 1930s led anarchism to shipwreck. In reality, this type of anarchism detested action and was content with simulations. It was necessary for Camillo Berneri to appear to denounce (in “L’Adunata dei Refratari”) what he called “anarchist cretinism” and to dedicate himself to critically treating social reality in order to make the era intelligible – anarchism included – a prerequisite for trying to change it. Logically, he was not very concerned with posterity (“anarchy is religion”, he once said) and more with giving real answers to concrete problems, whether or not they clashed with orthodoxy. He spoke provocatively of a “libertarian State” by showing real anarchy as a totally decentralized federal administrative structure. His works always dealt with precise problems or urgent theoretical questions, never or almost never with principles or purposes. Unfortunately, there were not many like him. Berneri’s assassination in May 1937 deprived anarchism of its most lucid mind.

The Spanish Civil War was both the high point of anarchism (the militias, the anti-fascist committees, socialisation) and the abyss into which it plunged (the idea that revolutionary conquests were best defended by retreating). Many sacred cows remained silent, and even showed understanding towards the “circumstantialism” of the CNT-FAI leadership bureaucracy. The real split in

anarchism occurred between the unconditional supporters of the collaborationist policy of the CNT leadership and the critical supporters of the Spanish libertarians. After Franco's victory, the ideology could not return to the Iberian arena as if nothing had happened, if its followers did not first take stock of the failed revolution and the monstrous state anarchism that the capitulations of 1936-37 gave rise to. They did not do so and the consequences are still being paid today. Despite all the difficulties, the historical exhaustion of anarchism, as it could be conceived in the years before the Second World War, has not meant the death of the ideal, but the impossibility of its reformulation in the same terms as those of the past. For example, Kropotkin's confidence in science and faith in moral progress are untenable. Old-fashioned trade unionism has been put out of play. Futurist visions of anarchism from other times seem tremendously puerile today.

With the dissolution of the traditional workers' movement and the penetration of capital into all corners of life, anarchism re-emerges, less as a postmodern ideology than as a diffuse state of mind, turning to feminism, the working environment, ruralism, anti-development, popular culture and alternative education. In these areas, it will have to coordinate, find new practical modalities of anti-capitalist combat and prepare theoretical weapons to confront the identitarian reaction, with its harmful ideas about power and truth, gender and sex, religion and race, language and food; with its essentialisation of differences, its anti-universalism, its relativism, its fictitious enemies, its technophilia... Unless it prefers to wallow in the rubbish offered by irrational and sectarian creeds that, to crown the confusion, also call themselves anarchist, even though they are not.

Miguel Amorós, August 2024.

Source: [Autonomies](#)

Original text:

**“¿Qué es el anarquismo?”**

The **first volume** (1984-2008) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-1-en>

The **second volume** (2009-2014) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-2-en>

This **third volume** (2015-2024) is available at:  
<https://archive.org/details/amoros-interventions-v-3-en>



# Complete liste of texts

## Volume 1

October 1984

**Report on the Assembly Movement**

December 1997

**Strikes That Give the Impression We Are Winning**

1999

**The Social War in Memory**

March 2003

**Primitivism and History**

October 2003

**The Two Anarchisms**

*Legalism and Illegalism in the Libertarian Movement in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Spain*

November 2003

**Revolution and Primitivism**

April 2004

**José Pellicer**

November 2004

**Afterword to “the history of ten years”**

January 2005

**On Workers Autonomy**

April 2005

**The Avatars of Culture as Commodity**

October 2005

**Technological Society — Mass Society**

November 2005

**The Rage of the Slums**



March 2006

**The Last Twenty Years of Social Liquidation**

*Concerning the Degeneration of Revolutionary Ideals after the End of the Working Class in the West*

July 2006

**The Whole World Is Like a Nowhere Land Called Alicante**

October 2006

**Primitivism in Technological Society**

November 2006

**Origins and Development of Workers Autonomy in Spain (1970-1976)**

March 2007

**Leninism, a fascist ideology**

June 2007

**City air**

*The end of freedom in the generalization of urban space*

August 2007

**Professional anarchy and theoretical disarmament**

*On insurrectionism*

October 2007

**Nostalgia for Origins**

December 2007

**When Capitalism Goes Green**

June 2008

**The Day They Killed José Pellicer**

October 2008

**Theoretical anarchism and anarchist ideology**

November 2008

**The Sick Society**

## Volume 2

April 2009

### **Growth and anti-growth**

May 2009

### **On Lucrative Horrors and Combative Identities**

<https://libcom.org/library/1-lucrative-horrors-combative-identities>

August 2009

### **A Brief History of the Italian Section of the Situationist International**

August 2009

### **The Voice of His Master**

*The Spatial Restructuring of Capitalist Society and Its Consequences*

January 2010

### **The Cunning Art of Destroying Cities**

*On the Totalitarian Tendency of the Urban Phenomenon*

Winter 2010

### **The Trauma of Curtailing Economic Growth**

April 2010

### **Capital, Technology and Proletariat**

September 2010

### **Urbi et Orbi**

*Principles of Anti-Developmentalism*

October 2010

### **Defense of the Territory or Co-Management of Its Destruction?**

October 2010

### **The Territory Has Been Absorbed by the City – The City Must Be Absorbed by the Territory**

May 2011

### **Urban struggles and class struggle**

June 2011

### **Untimely meditations for silencing the drum circles**

June 2011

### **The Dialectic of Rise and Fall**

October 2011

**Throwing Stones at Progress**

January 2012

**Notes on “The Situationist International: The Art of Historical Intervention”**

October 2012

**Capitalism, therefore crisis**

November 2012

**Midnight in the century**

*Notes against progress*

December 2012

**The Revolution Now and Always**

January 2013

**Masses, partocracy and fascism**

May 2013

**The War Against Territory, the Highest Stage of Domination**

June 2013

**Some Random Notes**

August 2013

**Rock for Beginners**

October 2013

**A brief explanation of the concept of territory and its implications**

December 2013

**Catalan Manifesto for the Social History of Town and Country**

January 2014

**Indisputable Proof**

January 2014

**Energy Crisis and Social Crisis**

February 2014

**Responses to a questionnaire submitted by Txema García Crespo on behalf of *El Diario***

March 2014

**Daybreak in dark times**

*The origins and vicissitudes of the village commune, the municipality, the nobility and the urban oligarchy in Catalonia*

April 2014

**Wage labour is the key to the whole system of domination**

*Responses to a questionnaire submitted by Álvaro Hilario  
in connection with the new Spanish edition of Manuscript found in Vitoria*

May 2014

**What is anti-industrialism and what does it want ?**

June 2014

**Electoral Insubordination**

July 2014

**A Note on the Civil Society Offensive**

Volume 3

February 2015

**Workers Autonomy, Anarchosyndicalism, Anarchism**

March 2015

**A look at the past: the revolutionary career of Joaquín Pérez**

March 2015

**An Interview with Miguel Amorós**

*Cazarabet-El Sueño Igualitario*

April 2015

**Vanishing Points in Working Class Culture**

*Reflections on the cultural genocide of the proletariat*

April 2015

**The Civil Society Plague**

*The Middle Class and Its Discontents*

May 2015

**The Invasion of Waste**

September 2015

**The golden mediocrity**

October 2015

**The Rise and Fall of Weak Thought**

January 2016

**Libertarian Critique and the Left Wing of Capitalism**

April 2016

**Interview with Ruta 66**

September 2016

**The Social Revolution and Civil War in Spain: A Brief Synopsis**

April 2017

**On Jaime Semprun**

*An Interview with Miguel Amorós*

May 2017

**Bakunin**

July 2017

**The Situationists and May 1968**

September 2017

**The Period of Decline**

*An assessment of the capitalist crisis based on the works of Jaime Semprun*

September 2017

**Miguel Amorós and Tomás Ibañez on the Catalanian Crisis**

November 2017

**Interview by Rubén Martín for *El Informador***

November 2017

**The Veins of Latin America Are More Open Than Ever**

November 2017

**The Pitfalls of the Social Economy**

November 2017

**At the Cutting Edge of the French Disease**

December 2017

**The Catalanian Affair**

February 2018

**Anatomy of a Scandal**

February 2018

**ZAD's Victory**

February 2018

**When the Barbarians Invade the Periphery**

*The Commercialization and Destruction of the Catalanian Pyrenees*

September 2018

**Taking Stock**

*Reflections on the Uncertain Likelihood of a European Revolution*

May 2019

**The new clothes of capitalist developmentalism**

*The new green period of capitalism and its ecological and citizen vanguard*

June 2020

**The anti-industrial perspective in disaster capitalism**

June 2024

**The likely causes of the rise of the extreme right in the capitalist world**

August 2024

**What is Anarchism?**

85 texts

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/category/author/miguel-amoros>

**To be continued...**

Edition réalisée par  
Bertrand Louart  
Radio Zinzine  
04 300 Limans  
France  
en décembre 2024.

Textes disponibles sur le blog :

**Et vous n'avez encore rien vu...**  
*Critique de la tecnoscience et du scientisme*  
<<http://sniadecky.wordpress.com/>>

**Cazarabet:** *What do you mean by “nuisance”?*

**Miguel Amorós:** It is a key concept in the thought of Jaime and his circle. The word “nuisance” is a neologism in French that refers to any factor that molests or harms the common people, and among these factors, some ideal candidates are pollution, nuclear power, wage labor, industrial food, consumerism, *machismo*, experts, leaders, capitalists, etc., and above all, the supreme nuisance: the State.

With the idea of nuisances, the *Encyclopedia* denounced the most common characteristic of the current social organization and the principal result of modern production.

**Free price**